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SYMBOLS OF CHRIST.

SYMBOLS OF CHRIST

BY

CHARLES STANFORD, D.D.

AUTHOR OF

"Voices from Calvary," "From Calvary to Olivet,"
"The Alternatives of Faith and Unbelief," etc.

A NEW EDITION.

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THE ROYAL PRIEST OF SALEM.

I

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

"And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

"And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all."—Genesis xiv. 18—20.

Compare with this passage, Psalm cx. 4; Hebrews v. 6—10, vi. 20, vii. 1—22.

The Royal Priest of Salem.

A SACRED interest belongs to the few surviving memorials of men who lived before the dawn of authentic history. We are hushed into reverence when we first see the Pyramids, when we first stand in the shadow of Stonehenge, when we first come up to the spot

> "Where trunks o'erthrown for centuries
> Cumber the forest floor;
> And in the great savannah
> *The solitary mound,*
> Built by the elder world, o'erlooks
> The loneliness around."

If conscious of such a spell upon our spirits at the sight of the rudest stone, the simplest mound, or the slightest footprint left by unknown fathers who trod the earth in the twilight of time, what should we feel if we held in our hands a document

written by one of their contemporaries, a fragment undoubtedly genuine and true, telling us of a man who lived a noble and holy life before they were born ?

Such an account now claims our examination. When London was an open waste, when its river was flowing in a solitude, and the red deer bounded over the spot where we meet to-day ; long before Greece was born or Rome was built ; before the artists of Egypt and Nineveh had learned to cover their temple walls with strange arabesque and pictured story ; perhaps even before " the smoke of worship had ever been seen going up from the rough, upright stones " on Salisbury Plain, there dwelt in Palestine a venerable chief who was called Melchizedek. Here we have a notice of him, penned while his name was still a household word, bright and striking as a thing fresh at this moment, yet a relic of rare antiquity. If it had no other charm, this alone would be calculated to startle and invite our reverential thought.

But this charm is only an incidental one. The Bible only appeals to our ideal faculty, and delights our sense of the picturesque, that our thoughts, thus excited, may be led on to things of infinite moment. The passage before us works on the mind in this way. It first kindles the spirit of enquiry

by its antiquarian and poetic interest, then we gradually discover, by the help of the Scriptures, that it holds a deeper meaning than at first met the eye. We pass on from the historical facts to their spiritual analogies, and in them we find the Saviour.

I. ENQUIRE INTO THE HISTORICAL FACTS. They are few and simple, and will be best brought out by four questions.

1. *How does Melchizedek first come into view?* He makes his appearance at the close of the first war recorded in the annals of the human race. The story of that war is briefly this: It seems that in his time the communities flourishing in the parts where the sons of Noah first rested on leaving the ark, were looked upon in the light of parent states, and that the tribes which had emigrated to a distance were looked upon in the light of colonies owing tribute to those states. Five colonial tribes, then dwelling in the green oasis the site of which is now covered by the Dead Sea, having paid this tribute for twelve years, at length declared their independence. To bring them into subjection again, and perhaps to quell a similar spirit of revolt that had appeared in the remoter provinces, the king of Elam, with three other kings, joined in battle force, marched through the country all along the eastern bank of the Jordan, subdued each tribe in suc-

cession, and having proceeded southward as far as the rocks of Engedi, attacked on their way back the five tribes that had first roused their anger, threw them into utter confusion amidst the bituminous pits of their native valley, plundered their cities, and swept away the survivors of the fight, taking, with the other captives, Lot, who had lately chosen the fruitful valley of Siddim for his home. One of the fugitives who had escaped by climbing the cliffs that overhung the field of defeat, hastened with the tidings to "Abram the Hebrew," who, with his allies, and three hundred and eighteen of his own trusty retainers, at once went after the victorious host, surprised it in the dead of night, and after a long pursuit recovered the prisoners with all the spoils of war. He was on his journey home, and had reached a place called the King's Dale, when a new and interesting event was unfolded. The account runs thus:—

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all."

2. *Who was he?* There is an old tradition of the Jews to the effect that this primæval saint was

no other than Shem the son of Noah ;* Shem being his personal name, Melchizedek his acquired or official designation. This view has often been adopted in modern times, and many things may be said in its favour. It is not at variance with the dates of Hebrew chronology. Though afterwards displaced by the Hamites, the children of Shem had been the first occupants of the soil, and if we may believe that the patriarch himself was spared to the time now in question, spared to be the last independent representative of the original population, the last of "the young world's grey fathers," the last witness left for God in the midst of an apostate land, this would accord with our highest thoughts of the Divine mercy, and would help to account for the reverence in which, under the name of Melchizedek, he was held by his neighbours, as well as for the peculiar honour shown to him by Abram. The fancy is an alluring one. Shall we accept it? Had the person before whom Abram knelt heard, when a child, snatches and fragments of story and song that had floated down from the days of Paradise? Had he startling tales to tell of a vanished world; of its beauties and wonders, its awful criminalities and tragic doom? Had he

* In the Jerusalem Targum on Gen. xiv. the paraphrase runs thus, "And Melek Zadika, who was Shem, son of Noah," etc.

seen the windows of heaven opened, and the fountains of the great deep broken up? Had he watched the hovering of the dove with the olive leaf? Had he stepped from his floating sanctuary on to the peak of Ararat, and could he in his great old age remember, as though he had seen them but yesterday, the minutest sights of that glad morning —the glistering sedge striping the ark, the bright arch crossing the sky, "the clear shining after the rain," the mysteries revealed at the retiring of the waters? We fear, however, that this theory, beautiful as it is, must be parted with, for we are compelled to own the final force of certain objections that may be made to it. It seems unlikely that Moses, who has hitherto spoken of Shem under his proper name, should here veil his identity under a different one. It seems unlikely that Abram and his venerable ancestor could have been co-residents in the same land without intercourse. It seems unlikely that a man whose pedigree was most distinctly known should have been selected as a typical instance of a man whose pedigree was altogether unknown. Even admitting that much of the inspired argument in the Epistle to the Hebrews turns on the mere incompleteness of the biographical fragment given in the book of Genesis, and on the absence in that account of any allusion

to his family, it seems very unlikely that Shem, above all other men, should have been made to live on the page of history as a personage mysteriously unrelated and alone. Upon the whole, therefore, we feel limited to the conclusion that he was, as Josephus affirms, a Canaanitish prince, who, amidst the nearly universal defection of his contemporaries, retained the uncorrupted faith of his fathers.*

3. *What was the secret of his peculiar greatness?* It seems to have resided in something beyond the rank indicated by his double title of king and priest. This rank was held by many besides himself. In the patriarchal times, the twofold relation of king and priest naturally grew out of the twofold relation which a father sustained to his family, as the ruler of the family life and leader of the family devotions. When the family enlarged into a tribe,

* It is scarcely needful that we should gravely examine any other opinions that have been advanced respecting the person of Melchizedek. It is a subject on which speculation seems to have gone wild. Hulsius took him for Enoch; Jurieu, for Ham; Owen, for a descendant of Japheth; Origen and Didymus, for an angel; the sect of the Melchizedekites in the fourth and fifth centuries, for a power, virtue, or influence of God; Hierachus, for the Holy Ghost; Kloppenburg, for a man purposely and immediately created by God for a special service; Ambrose, Cunæus, and others, for the Son of God Himself; Kurtz says, "he was probably of Shemitic origin;" others have supposed that he was Mizraim; the old opinion of the Jews, also of the Samaritans, afterwards adopted by Luther, by Melancthon, and by such Englishmen as Seldon, Broughton, Lightfoot, and Jackson, was that he was Shem. We feel inclined upon the whole, for the reason mentioned above, to adopt the statement of Josephus (De Bell. Jud. vi. 10), that he was of one blood with the children of Ham, among whom he lived, and was the chief of a settled Canaanitish tribe.

and the tribe into a nation, its head still retained his original relation to the rest. As ruler of the family life, he was king; as leader of the family devotions, he was priest. Melchizedek was this, but was also more than this. He appears to have held the rank in some unusual and pre-eminent sense. This pre-eminence was conceded to him by the surrounding chieftains. They evidently regarded him as a sacred personage. Abram, whose vocation was so high, receives his blessing, and bows to him as one whose vocation was in some sense higher than his own. Though only a traveller through the country, and not one of his constituents, he gives him, apparently as a matter of course, a tithe of his spoils; and the king of Sodom, who was standing by, enters into no negotiation as to the division of the spoils until after the tithes have been paid. The record of him is brief, and a certain degree of obscurity may ever brood over it, but some hints of the reasons for the deep veneration in which he was held gleam in almost every line. His very *names* suggest some explanation of it. A man must indeed have been eminently righteous and pacific, and rare and radiant must have been the halo of holy glory that shone round his life, before, by common consent of society so depraved as that of

Canaan, he would have been styled "King of Righteousness" and "King of Peace." *His blessing on Abram* throws further light on the secret of his power: "Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be the most high God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand." These terms show that he recognized in the Hebrew stranger the favourite of Heaven. The style of his benediction is so grand and large that it seems also to show a knowledge of the promise that all the nations of the earth would be blessed in Abram, and that to his descendants would be given the land of Canaan. By means of this priest's blessing God set a new seal to the covenant He had already made with His servant, and it seems most natural to suppose that the priest himself was not acting blindly, but that he had some knowledge of that covenant. "His speaking of the most high God as possessor of heaven and earth would seem," says Andrew Fuller, "to intimate as much as this, as it recognizes the *principle* on which the right of Abram's posterity to possess themselves of Canaan depended." One cannot help thinking that if the faintest suspicion had crossed the minds of the other chiefs that Abram had been marked by some oracle as the father of a nation that would one day drive out

their own children from their family estates, and take possession of the land, Abram would not have been suffered to live another day, and that if Melchizedek had this knowledge, he had it exclusively, and as the result of Divine influence. Only suppose that he was known to be a man whose soul was sometimes visited with preternatural illuminations, and that he was looked upon by the men of his age in the light of a prophet, and you will see another reason for the honour in which he was held. *The designation of his priesthood* still further helps to account for it. All the heads of the tribes were priests, but as if he stood alone in office, he alone is called "priest of the most high God." Their priesthood might have died into a form, might have become a degenerate and meaningless thing, but it is evident that he was regarded as truly and properly a priest. His exclusive title, together with the manner in which he is spoken of in the later Scriptures, will support the belief that while other chiefs held the office in their respective tribes by right of inheritance, he held it amongst his own people by virtue of Divine appointment. In the childhood of the world it was God's way to declare His appointments by striking and visible signs. Most likely, therefore, by tokens which none could resist or deny, he was known as the man whom God

had consecrated to be His priest, and that he stood alone in all that age as the one agent who was solemnly ordained to show the path of life by a sacrificial ministry.

4. Another natural question that arises is, *Where did he live?* He was "king of Salem," the inspired historian informs us, but where was that? Jerome supposes it to have been the Salim near which John baptized,* but this opinion is now generally abandoned as untenable, and there appears to be no sufficient reason for giving up the old belief that it was the primitive city, afterwards called Jerusalem. Salim, we know, was the ancient name of the Jewish metropolis. The Psalmist, in praising God, says, "In Salem is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion." There was a "King's Dale" in its vicinity, which appears still further to identify it with the Salem in the book of Genesis. It is likely that this particular station lay direct in Abram's line of march from Dan to Hebron, but if it did not, it was certainly sufficiently near it to attract him somewhat out of his way by its promise of rest, and by the opportunity it offered of intercourse with a chieftain so different from the fiery rajahs around, and the holy peacefulness of whose sway had probably won for his own city the characteristic title of

* Ad Evagrium. iii. fol. 13.

Salem, or "Peace." The imagination delights to picture the old "King of righteousness" daily moving amongst the very scenes which, in ages after, should witness the life of his great Antitype. He was familiar with those mountain solitudes in which Christ afterwards breathed His midnight prayers. He looked round and saw the spaces where "the foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests," but where, afterwards, "the Son of Man had not a place to lay his head." He watched the fields of lilies, now in still beauty, now touched with the breeze and clouded over with undulating waves of colour, where Christ afterwards taught His disciples to "consider the lilies," and gather from them lessons of loving faith. He saw palm-feathers waving where afterwards grew those trees whose branches, torn down by the fickle crowd, carpeted the Saviour's pathway. He often lingered on the woody slope where afterwards Jesus paused and wept over the city, as it lay luminous in the vale below. He unconsciously traversed the ground where the streets were afterwards to be built along which Jesus "was led as a lamb to the slaughter," and where those gates were afterwards to stand through which He was led to be crucified. The place whereon he stood was holy ground. Day by day he exercised his peaceful ministry, unknow-

ingly to himself foreshowing the life and death of One who in the far future of time should minister in the very same region, and there at last offer that great sacrifice which should consummate and explain all the Divinely-appointed sacrifices that had been offered since the Fall.

II. TRACE OUT THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS NARRATIVE. Soon as it is given the name of Melchizedek seems to drop out of human memory, but nearly a thousand years after that name is uttered again, and uttered in a most abrupt and unexpected way, in one of the Temple songs, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."* Our attention is strongly excited; it is certain that some deep meaning is couched beneath the name, and we wait to know what it is. The interpretation, however, is delayed; and the phrase holds fast its secret for centuries, till at last an apostle breaks the silence, calls attention to the ancient historic mystery, darts into it swift and searching thoughts, fills it with light, and makes it a star to guide wise men to Christ. If we had only gained our knowledge of Melchizedek from the account given by Moses, we should not have thought that any mystical meaning belonged to his character; as far

* Psalm cx. 4.

as Christ is concerned, the page would have been a blank, but now we find that it contains a Christian doctrine, written as with invisible ink, traceless for ages, and altogether unsuspected, until the sympathetic fire of inspiration gradually brought out the cyphers into startling distinctness, and revealed the Saviour there.

1. He was, probably, intended to serve as *a symbol of the mystery connected with the Saviour's person.* Mystery hovers about him. Not a word is said of his father or mother, his "beginning of days or end of years." Nothing is told of his achievements, nothing of his history before or after that single circumstance which is related in the book of Genesis. Solitary, mysterious, unrelated —like a flash from another world, like an apparition that slowly slides into light, scintillates for a moment on the vision, speaks forth some awful hint, and then fades away, so this august personage seems to come and go. Before we can ask, What is thy name? Whence comest thou? Whither goest thou? he is gone. The mystery is not so much in the tale as in the manner in which it is related. On the page of inspiration, as on a dial-plate, the shadows as well as the lights are significant. Not the speech only, but "the very silence of Scripture is inspired." A supreme power watched

over the writers, guiding them not only as to what was to be told, but as to what was to be left untold. Hence any omission in their narratives gains special importance. The omission of all marginal particulars in this ancient notice of Melchizedek was not without design. It was foreseen that the very incompleteness of the tale would make its typical significance more complete. Guided by the Spirit of God, writing to the Hebrew people in a style of allegorical interpretation accordant with the Hebrew fashions of thought, the holy scribe turns the circumstance to account, and employs it to enhance their reverence for Christ. While the literary form of his teaching was specially adapted to the genius of the people for whom he originally wrote, it will serve to convey the same truths and to work the same reverential impressions on us all. The first effect of what he says is to impress us with a sense of Christ's mysterious and more than mortal greatness. We think of the angel's words to Jacob, "Wherefore dost thou ask my name?" We think of the priest of whom the challenge is made, "Who shall declare his generation?" We think of the declaration that "he hath a name which no man knoweth but he himself." We are reminded that as nothing is said of Melchizedek beyond the brief record of his interview with Abram in the

discharge of his practical ministry, so nothing will be told in relation to Christ but what is practical. We know nothing of His infinite, immortal history, nothing beyond that section of His life which belongs in some way to His appearance on earth. We know that He is King, we know that He is Priest, we know that He comes "to bless us, by turning every one of us from our iniquities;" we know that it is His office to cheer us in our solitude, and refresh us in our weariness, by mystical bread and wine; we know that only a Divine Person could be and do all this, but all the grand connexions of these revealed facts must remain unknown.

2. *He shadowed forth some important truths in relation to Christ as our Priest.*

The Hebrews were slow to understand the priesthood of Christ, and to see how it could ever set aside and supersede the priesthood of Aaron, which to their minds embodied the very ideal of priestly perfection. But so far from being perfect as an ultimate thing, it was not even the perfect type of that which is ultimate. It occupied an important place in the system of symbolism by which God had been slowly training the world into a capacity of recognizing the Divine Priest when He appeared, but some of the grandest peculiarities

of His office it left unrepresented. One design of the epistle addressed to them by name was to show this,—to take down their dangerous pride, to dissolve the spells of splendour that held them in bondage to their own ceremonial after it had done its appointed work, and to prove that for the most complete rehearsal and prefiguration of Christ's ministry they must look to a type that was given altogether without imposing show, and given long before they had a distinct national existence; for, says the writer, He is a priest "after the order of Melchizedek." Certain distinctions are peculiar to this institute, which, more vividly than any peculiar to their own, served to illustrate the sublimest facts in the ministry of Christ.

It was distinguished for its *antiquity*. It had existed from the time of the first fall. On the other hand, the Jewish priesthood was by comparison a thing of modern date. The one began with the history of human sin, the other only began with the history of the Jewish commonwealth. The ministry of the patriarch in Salem was of the same kind, and in obedience to the same law, as that of the penitent who knelt in sight of Abel's tomb. We may imagine that he was distinguished by some new and striking sign from heaven as God's

accepted priest, but we have no reason to think that he was made a priest on a new principle, that any new rule of priesthood was given him, or that at the time when he received his signal honour there was any act of special legislature passed to alter in the least degree the old forms of intercourse between earth and heaven.

This fact has its answering feature in the sacerdotal work of Christ. Christ is said to be "a priest after the order of Melchizedek," as intimating along with other things that His mediation has always been in force. However diversified may have been the methods of announcing or dispensing truth, from the beginning it has been the fixed axiom of Divine jurisprudence that "without shedding of blood is no remission"; and all the sacrifices of faith have derived their sole meaning and power from the death of Jesus. Men have never been saved by the ministry of any other priest, never saved on any other principle; never by works, never by rites, never by penances, never by the instinctive religion of innocence, or the glowing adorations of praise. The ground of pardon—secret or revealed, anticipated or remembered, known by the faithful promise or by accomplished fact—has ever been the same. It has always been true that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from

all sin." In the view of Omniscience, and as the centre of saving efficacy, He has been the priest ministering and "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

It was distinguished by its *catholicity*. The Jewish priesthood, as its name imports, was meant only for the Jews. Their pontiff was anointed for the sake of his own countrymen. He personified the nation. As an intercessor, his one idea was "Israel"; primarily, he was only the minister of a local religion—a religion whose forms could never be fully transplanted to another soil, or live in other air. But the priesthood of Melchizedek was not limited in its reference to one particular people. It was founded for the human family, and not restrictively for any narrow section of it; for it began when that family consisted of a few disconsolate weepers at the gate of Eden; and as in the course of ages the family stock sent forth its branches over many lands, it went out with all those ramifications, and remained in its unchanged form the family institute. Though exercised at Salem, it had no organic laws that made it more adapted to that than to any other place. It still counted all men as belonging to one family, and looked upon the race with an aspect of entire impartiality. Like this is the priesthood of Christ. It knows no topical distinc-

tions, it pays no regard to colour or climate, it allows no national favouritism, it breathes a love "which no land can limit, and no ages stay." "When our priest was born, the tidings of His birth were for *all* people." When He was on His way to the altar of sacrifice He said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw *all* men unto me." When He passed from the altar to the throne His voice streamed serenely down to us, bearing in its accents the invitation, "Look unto me and be saved, *all* the ends of the earth." Jewish names flash not alone upon His breastplate, but along with them are names elected from "*all* kindreds and peoples and tribes and tongues." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." To save *sinners!* True, this is a restrictive term. By the most sharp and absolute line it limits the scope of the gospel message to one particular class, but it is a class that includes all the world, and no man whose name is "sinner" has to say that there is no priest authorized to plead for him. "Thou art lost, for thou art a sinner," said the Evil Spirit in Martin Luther's dream. Every man into whose soul, from the same source, the same despairing thought is darted, may meet it as he did, with the defiance, "I thank thee, Satan, for saying that I am a sinner;

for inasmuch as thou sayest I am a sinner, I answer, Christ died for sinners, and therefore He died for me."

His priesthood was distinguished by its *independence.* We have already assumed that the very manner in which this story of Melchizedek is told is typical. Even if we could by the study and comparison of dates and facts elsewhere given discover his pedigree or associations, we could not discover them from that brief account to which alone the New Testament writer alludes. There is no reference there to "his father or mother," or line of ancestry. He shines apart. He stands in lone conspicuity, as if he had no earthly connexions. Advantage is taken of this omission, and it is employed to illustrate the majestic independence of Christ. Unlike those who were only eligible to the priestly functions by virtue of their descent from priestly fathers, Christ has no antecedent. Unlike the Hebrew chief priest, who was surrounded by an army of inferior priests, Christ has no associate. No transgressor may officiate as his own priest, or help to save himself by any make-weight goodness, any supplemental merit, or any self-inflicted stroke of pain. No man, or caste of men, may aspire after partnership with Christ. The solitary priest of humanity, by virtue of His own lonely sacrifice

and representative perfection, He treads that holy place in which none durst walk but He, and there accomplishes, by Himself, that which perfects and crowns our salvation.

It was distinguished by its typical *perpetuity*. Melchizedek had "no beginning of days or end of years;" that is, his priesthood had no recorded origin or close; there is no notice of his retirement, and as far as the record is concerned, he might be living now. This circumstance is seized, and made to yield its contribution to the argument. The Bible has withheld all knowledge of his death, that he might have a kind of typical immortality, and thus be made to stand as a vivid and impressive sign of One who is really what he was only typically —"a priest for ever." No law of development, or march of mind, will ever demand a change in the Christian economy; it has in it no element of decay; from the necessity of its present perfection it can never be superseded by an arrangement more complete. Change is written on everything else. It is written on ourselves, it is written on the faces into which we look for sympathy, it is written even on the things which poetry delights to make the symbols of invariable strength; but through all the flight of time, and all the incidents of this dissolving life, Christ is changeless. In Himself, and in

the living virtue of His gospel, He abides for ever and is for ever the same.

3. Melchizedek was the prefiguration of Christ as *King of His people.*

He typified *the union of the kingly and priestly offices of Christ.* No symbol of this was supplied by the Levitical economy. No Jew was permitted to hold both offices in connection. The priest was not permitted to rule as king, nor the king to serve as priest. When King Uzziah went to burn incense upon the altar of the Lord, the white fire of leprosy glanced ominously upon his forehead, and "he hastened to go out, because the Lord had smitten him." But Melchizedek lived before the enactment of this law; and, in accordance with primitive usage, he was both king and priest. This foreshadowed the mystery of Christ's twofold office. He was declared to be "a priest upon His throne. He was exalted a Prince and a Saviour;" "both Lord and Christ." Amidst the terrors of the crucifixion, which were only the circumstances of His great priestly act, He claimed His kingly rights; and it is remarkable that at this solemn crisis prominent reference was made to these rights, both by Him and by His crucifiers, by Him in their assertion, by them in their denial. In what character did the Jews reject Him? It

was in the character of king; for they cried, "We will not have this man to reign over us!" In what guise did they insult Him? It was as a king, for the soldiers clothed Him with purple, and placed a crown of thorns upon His head. On what pretext did they put Him to death? It was because He claimed to be a king; they said, "Whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar." What inscription did they place over His dying head? As if torn from the wall of some palace, or the canopy of some throne, the parchment that hung upon His cross bore the inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews." When the cloud of that sorrowful hour had passed away, when He had dwelt again amidst His own native royalties in heaven, and had come down to pay that transient visit to our earth in which He gave forth the final revelation of His will, what were the tokens of His coming? Garmented in awful pomp, as the Priest of the Church He wore "a golden girdle"; as its magistrate He grasped "the two-edged sword"; as a priest He walked amidst the seven golden candlesticks; as a king He held "the keys of death and hell."

There is a distinction between the glory of nature and the glory of office. He is our king by His divine nature, but we now speak of what He is in

His official relation to all saved souls. His life, as our king, in this new sense—our king so as to make us His own again after we had been lost; to subdue us to Himself again after we had revolted, and then to rule over our whole existence after we have been saved,—is the very end of His ministry as our priest. He is our priest only that He may be our king. Ponder this truth, Christians. Many fancy that they are willing that He alone should save them who are not willing that He alone should rule them. In creed, they are ready to trust Him as their priest; in practice, they are not ready to serve Him as their king. They make a selection from His laws, choosing some and rejecting others; or while they hold in a general way His right to their allegiance, they seem to pay tribute in turn to many masters. To see them in some hours you would say, "Fashion is their king," or in others, "Public opinion is their king"; or in others, "Some master idea or besetting vice is their king"; but Christ, by force of His secret spirit, is striving to be king over all the heart; king over all the mind; king over all the life; king over all the strength of all His subjects. Besides His sovereignty over the Christian's individual life, He claims to be the sole lord and lawgiver of His Church; and we owe to His crown-rights a respect sacred and entire as that

which fired the old spiritual hero of Scotland to declare His readiness to give up life itself rather than allow the right of King James to legislate within the empire of King Jesus:

> "For know, nor of the terms complain,
> Where Jesus comes, He comes to reign,
> To reign with universal sway;
> Even thoughts must die that disobey."

The ancient Canaanitish prince also serves to announce *the character as king, and the effect of His kingly administration.* Two names are ascribed to him, Melchizedek and Melek-shalem, the former signifying "king of righteousness," the latter "king of peace." The first is the testimony given to his character. In a land of dark and stormy crime he stood apart in sublime singularity, a beautiful rebuke of sin. His righteousness was his distinction; it passed into a proverb, and suggested his very name. The second is the testimony given to the effect of his administration. Conducted on such a principle, it led to order and happiness, and made the place of his authority an asylum of peace. The course of ages unfolded the fact that these names had a prefigurative meaning. They hold answers to two important questions respecting the King of souls. Do you ask what He is individually? The answer is, "King of righteousness; a

being loving righteousness, working righteousness, promoting righteousness, procuring righteousness, imputing righteousness to those whom He saves, perfectly sinless, and the enemy and abolisher of all sin." Do you ask what He is practically, and in relation to the effect of His reign? The answer is, "King of peace; a sovereign whose kingdom is a shelter for all who are miserable, a covert for all who are persecuted, a resting-place for all who are weary, a home for the destitute, and a refuge for the lost." „Thus it was that in those early times the gospel was in symbolic guise revealed to men, and the grand truth set to live and walk before their eyes, that He who is our righteousness is He only who is our peace."*

4. The story of the interview between Melchizedek and Abram seems to be a typical picture of *Christ exercising His ministry of benediction.* "He is seen not *approaching* God *for* Abram, but '*coming forth*' from God *to* Abram." When the heir of promise is weary from the strain of the fight and the toil of the journey, the royal priest of Salem comes to meet him, and in his priestly character pronounces a blessing upon him; in his princely hospitality gives him refreshment. So, day by day, does Christ come forth to meet the

* Alexander's "Connexion and Harmony of the Old and New Testaments."

exhausted child of faith, giving him that which bread and wine anciently symbolized, for bread is the emblem of sustainment, wine of joy. Having accomplished all that falls under the type of a priest in the act of presenting sacrifice and making intercession, in order to procure the blessing, He comes forth to bestow it; having established a kingdom of righteousness and peace, He comes forth with royal munificence and grace to "fill our hearts with food and gladness." "As surely as in the natural sphere of God's government each day brings some gift of His goodness, whether the sun that shines, or the rain that descends, or the fruits in their seasons; so in the greater sphere of redemption each day brings to the family of faith some fresh supply of strengthening mercy from their great Melchizedek. He comes not to offer sacrifice, that has been once and for ever done; but He comes to bless, to cheer, to strengthen, to put the cup of joy to thy trembling, or it may be, fainting lips. No doubt, if our eye were more single, and our faith more enlarged and energetic, we should know far more of the *recipiency* of this strength, know it in the paths of "glory and virtue," of enterprise and victory. It was this of which St. Paul spake when he said, "I am strong as to all things (*πάντα ἰσχύω*) through Christ which

strengtheneth me;" but still, in every season when we find sustainment ministered, when, for example, in the midst of the languor or pains of death, we find strength, and hope, and comfort given, we may trace in this the faithful love and power of him who, as Melchizedek, 'cometh forth to minister.'"*

"What shall we render to the Lord for all His benefits?" He rightfully claims all we have and all we are, but when all has been surrendered we have contributed nothing in payment of our infinite debt to the Saviour; nothing that can add a ray to the brightness of His glory, or a drop to the ocean of His bliss. Abram, in token of grateful reverence, having been honoured by the priest's blessing, and strengthened by his hospitality, "gave him tithes of all." How far can his conduct furnish us with a model for our own? Shall we be content with mechanically measuring out a tenth of our possessions to be devoted to the service of the true Melchizedek? Let us rather cultivate the principle which the ancient payment of tithes exemplified; and while converting all common things into means of serving Christ, let us, from motives of conscience as well as of gratitude, give *generously*, yet *methodically*, the best of

* "Leicester Lectures on Great Protestant Truths" (p. 23). By Benjamin Wills Newton, formerly Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford.

our time, best of our power, the best of our property, the best of our best, when divinely called for, to aid Christ's cause in the world.

SHILOH.

II.

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."—GENESIS xlix. 10.

Shiloh.

SLOWLY lifted up in his bed for the last time, the shadow of death on his face, the light of strange glory in his soul, stone blind from great old age, and feeling about for hands that he wished to clasp once more before he left the world; pausing for breath and speaking with difficulty, speaking first to one, then to another—then to another, to each of his twelve sons one by one,—the dying Jacob delivered the charge in which we meet with this remarkable saying: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

Picture the scene distinct in the sunshine, mark the riveted looks of the company, imagine the awe that fell upon Judah, how his soul rose up; his thrilling sense of personal concern in the meaning

of the oracle, and his strong desire to understand it. Believe me, it speaks with the same straight aim and striking life to you as it did to him, and it is no less true than wonderful that it is as directly meant for every one who hears it in this place to-day, as it was for any one who heard it in the hush of that hieroglyphed chamber within sight of the pyramids forty centuries ago. This will appear from the following considerations :—

I. Using the word prophecy in its predictive sense, THIS IS THE LANGUAGE OF UNQUESTIONABLE PROPHECY. What is prophecy ? We know that "old experience may attain to something like prophetic strain ;" but it was not old experience that made Jacob a prophet. We must distinguish between the anticipations of keen sagacity and the lights of prophetic inspiration. Such lights were streaming in his soul when he spoke these words. In assuming, what we hope presently to prove, their Messianic reference, they glance at things that were to happen in far-off lands, and at the distance of far-off ages. They foretel historic changes which to human view were most unlikely to take place, and which could never be brought about by the agency of human contrivance. They strike open secrets of dread moment and transporting glory. They appeal to all the world. They imply, if true,

a knowledge of the future in all its million million threads of intersecting influence, in all its amazing complications, and in all its deep and secret harmonies through all the course of time. Such knowledge dwells in Him alone "who inhabiteth eternity." True prophecy is only in the power of the one eternal Spirit, before whom the future is distinct as the present and certain as the past. In subservient office, man may be a prophet; in sublime reality, the only prophet is God.

When, therefore, I read over this saying, when I search the later histories of inspiration, and find there the radiant seal of its truth in the records of its actual accomplishment; when I find, as before we part I trust we all shall find, that Shiloh has been on this earth, that He came at the time appointed, and that He is now in the act of doing the work here foreshown; then, if unhappily, I have before been a sceptical student of the Pentateuch, and have had my fears that some of its sayings were largely intermixed with elements only human, I know that this one sentence, at least, is Divine. A greater than Jacob is here. He was but the momentary organ of Divinity. "The mighty God the Lord hath spoken," and this is His language. Let all my soul wake up to give all the fixed thought and thrilling reverence due to that

which, being unquestionably the language of prophecy, is unquestionably the language of God!

II. This prophecy CONTAINS A REVELATION OF CHRIST. It quickens my spiritual interest as well as my worshipful awe, for what can be more interesting to a sinner, and, therefore, what more interesting to me, than the knowledge of the Saviour? The greatest Hebrew scribes and Christian critics agree in the decision that it points to Him alone. He is revealed under an intensely significant name. His name as absolute God had early been told, but His name as Mediator had never been spoken on earth until now. In the promise of His coming, heard on the day when Paradise was lost, no name was mentioned. In His appearances to the patriarchs, His name was still kept a secret. In the hour of heightened life and daring prayer, when Jacob ventured to say, "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name?" His name remained untold. But now, in a moment of rare spiritual stimulus, and just as he is about to die, the name SHILOH is mysteriously whispered to his soul, and he knows it is the name of the Saviour. Christ needs many names to disclose His manifold aspects of grace, and endless diversities of function on behalf of those whom He designs to bless. The Puritan fathers, those devout Scripturists, delighted to say that they found in Scripture

a hundred and eight of His names. In describing Him, language labours to express that which transcends all the forms of speech and all the powers of symbol :—

> "Join all the glorious names
> Of wisdom, love, and power
> That ever mortals knew,
> That angels ever bore ;
> All are too mean to speak His worth,
> Too mean to set my Saviour forth."

The name here given to the Saviour we understand to signify "The Peaceful One." It seems to be equivalent in meaning to "The Tranquillizer," and if this rendering be correct, it is remarkable that after all the glorious names ascribed to Him by the heralds of heaven, down to the day when the voice of inspiration was hushed in the tomb of the last apostle, not one is more striking for its intrinsic fitness than this. Looked at as a revealing epithet, it holds the germ of all future revelations. Its meaning is infinite, and its exquisite adaptation as a sign to know Christ by will seem to brighten for ever.*

* I am quite conscious of the difficulties that attend the interpretation of this passage, and of the almost countless diversities of opinion that have prevailed about it. Some writers, whose scholarship claims our respect, even doubt if it has a Messianic reference. Mr. Twisleton, for instance, in Dr. Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, contends for the opinion that if the original Hebrew text is correct as it now stands, the translation should be, 'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, till he shall go to Shiloh ;'

III. This revelation of Christ was connected with the ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE PARTICULAR TIME WHEN HE WAS TO APPEAR. Next in interest to the news that Shiloh was certainly coming would be the question, "In what quarter may we look for Him, and at what hour will His arrival be due?" In accordance with the order of slow and gradual development observable in the process of Divine revelation, the exact hour was not yet to be specified, but instead of this a certain change in the history of Judah was foretold, and it was hinted about the time that change was taking place Messiah would appear. All claimants to the title who

supposing that allusion is made to the primacy of Judah in the war, until the ark was solemnly deposited in Shiloh. This opinion has been maintained by Bleek, Diestel, Tuch, and many others. But, as it has been remarked by Dr. Pusey, "This rendering is obviously the reverse of the fact, since the eminence of Judah was not *before* he came to Shiloh, but afterwards." Besides, it seems impossible to believe that in this great prophecy of the blessings that should respectively distinguish the twelve tribes "in the last days," no reference should be made to the event which was the great blessing of the covenant and the highest distinction of all. If reference to it were made, it would be made in the address to Judah, whose tribe was to be spared for the sake of this event, after the other tribes had been dispersed. It may be that a "sufficiently good" grammatical meaning is given to the text by regarding it as speaking of the little town called Shiloh, known in the early days of Hebrew history, but it does not seem worthy of the grandeur of the occasion thus to limit it. If on critical grounds of reasonable validity we can regard it as referring to the Divine Person who was to come forth out of Judah, it would seem more natural, and almost all the great critics judge that it may be so regarded.

Yet even amongst those who say the Messiah is plainly intended there is the widest difference of opinion as to the interpretation of the word Shiloh. In eight of the most ancient versions we have eight different renderings of this word, and only one of these at all recognises the idea adopted in the above sermon. This is the Samaritan, which runs thus: "The sceptre shall not be taken away from Judah, nor a leader from his banners, until the Pacific shall come." But I think the majority of the best modern scholars trace the term to the root שרה (*quievit*),

came before that time, and all who came after it, would be at once detected impostors. The notice was sufficiently definite to summon the spirit of watchful expectancy at the true crisis, and to supply the materials of needful evidence when the crisis was over. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." The term rendered "sceptre" strictly means "a staff," and implies any kind of ruling authority, without reference to its precise form or character. Keep in mind that it does not of necessity mean *royalty*. "Sceptre," as I understand it, means some kind of legislative authority;

"to rest, to be at peace." Hengstenburg (Christol.) says there cannot be any doubt; and, indeed, it is now almost universally admitted that it is thus decided. He says the analogy of the name indicates that it has here an adjective signification, and, like Solomon, Shiloh denotes "the Man of Rest," corresponds to the "Prince of Peace" in Isaiah ix. 5, and, viewed in its character of a proper name, is like the German "*Friedrich*"—Frederick; *i.e.* "rich in peace," "The Peaceful One." The ultimate opinion of Gesenius was that Shiloh should be translated "rest," and that the verse should be rendered, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah . . . till rest come, and the nations obey him," the allusion being to the Messiah, who was to spring from the tribe of Judah. The Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford understands the word to hold the idea of "rest," or "peace." He thinks that the town of Shiloh became so called after Israel had *rested* there. He remarks that שִׁלֹה (as it stands in the Hebrew text, Gen. xlix. 10) "would be an old form, which becoming a proper name thus early never entered into the ordinary language." Incidentally, he thus comments on the whole passage: "The prophecy (in the sense in which all understood it, until in the last century it was in the interest of unbelief not to understand it) fixed, at the new era of the people, the promise to Abraham. The promise, 'in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,' was expanded in both its parts. Judah was pointed out as the line in which the Seed should come; the blessing was that he should be 'peace'; that blessing was to reach the Gentiles through obedience to Him. The name Shiloh was enlarged in the later prophecies of the 'Prince of Peace.'" ("Lectures on the Prophet Daniel," p. 255.)

"lawgiver," some kind of legislator; and the drift of meaning in the verse is that Judah should not cease to have some kind of government and some kind of governor of his own until the sovereignty of Shiloh was established. Not that he should not cease to have a king until that time, but that he should not cease to be a distinct tribe, a body politic, with some kind and degree of self-rule. Bishop Newton says, "The promise meant that the tribe should continue, amongst the departures of all the others, with rulers, and judges, and governors of its own till the coming of the Messiah. In this captivity, therefore, they had rulers and governors of their own,* and these existed even in our Saviour's time, though their power in capital cases was abridged.† The sceptre was then departing, and in about forty years it was totally gone; their city was taken, and from that time they have never formed one body or society, but have lived without a ruler, without a lawgiver, and without supreme authority and government in any part of the earth."

* The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah contain allusions to their appointment for themselves of fasts and feasts, notices that prove the existence amongst them of rulers and lawgivers in the sense for which the Bishop pleads. We are further told that when Cyrus issued the proclamation that gave them liberty, "there arose up the chief of the fathers of Judah," and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. It is evident, therefore, that they kept their place as a people, with rulers and judges of their own, even when they were in a strange land.

† We continually read of "the chief priests and elders of the people" exercising a certain jurisdiction.

The Jews themselves erroneously understood the "sceptre" mentioned in this verse to be the sign of kingship. According to them, the rule of their native kings was meant. That rule, they said, had never been suffered finally to depart, even in the time of the great captivity. It was suspended during their expatriation, but was restored at their return. But when a foreigner named Herod was placed upon the throne all Jewish patriots were in deep consternation. Men with wild and haggard looks, their garments rent, and ashes on their streaming hair, went about the streets, crying, "Woe to us! woe to us! for the sceptre is departed from Judah and a lawgiver from between his feet"! * That which they had witnessed was, they thought, not to take place until Shiloh came. He was to come *first*, or not to come at all. How was it? Had the Most High revoked His ancient promises? Had He, in anger for their sins, shut up His tender mercies? Were they not to be visited by the Deliverer for whose tokens they had been wishing so earnestly and waiting so long? They misread the sign of the sceptre, interpreted the prediction too literally, and gave up heart too soon. The prophecy of Shiloh was not intended to limit His coming to any one particular moment, but to

* Jerusalem Targum.

the whole of the historical crisis on which they had just entered; the whole of the indefinite period during which the old national polity should be seen in the act of vanishing away. "Wait on," it might have been said, "ye watchmen of Judah, wait a little longer: heaven and earth may pass away, but not one word of God can fail."

One night, thirty years later, when Judah, as a distinct tribe with officers of its own, had not yet vanished, a few poor shepherds, who, perhaps, remembered the wail that was heard in the streets on the night of Herod's coronation, heard a sound in the air still more strange and solemn. They were in the dark fields, keeping watch over their flocks, when on a sudden they became magnetically conscious of supernatural presence, making them all eye, all ear, all soul. A swift flicker and wave of glory shot across the glistering grass, causing the scenery to swim in light. Chimes of mysterious music stole on the hush of nature and startled the sleeping wilderness. Heaven had opened. An angel had flashed down! Shiloh had come; He had come; the long-looked-for had come at last: heaven's best gift, and earth's best benediction! No wonder that for a charmed season "the saintly shout and solemn jubilee of heaven" should be heard on earth, and that all the

air should be alive with the pealing, multitudinous cry of angelic gratulation, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men!"

Many of the Jews who ardently longed for the advent of Shiloh put a merely physical interpretation on the promise of His coming. They waited for Him as their Emancipator from the Roman yoke, their splendid earthly king, in whose exaltation they would be exalted. They seem to have thought that the sceptre would depart from them only because He would take it in their name; their lawgiver cease, because He Himself would be their lawgiver; their existing policy die, but only into something of the same kind, far more glorious; as the saints die into heaven, or the stars die into day, and that to Him, as to their own representative, all the people of the world would gather to worship at the throne of Judea. Theirs was a woeful mistake. The oracle meant what it seemed to mean. At the establishment of Shiloh's government their own was entirely to cease, and the old economy was inevitably to make way for the new.

Not at once was this change witnessed. Shiloh had come, but not yet was there any perceptible difference to be traced in the condition of the Hebrew race. Not yet did the "sceptre" drop from Judah's grasp: not yet did the "lawgiver"

fail. Still were his national distinctions continued, his temple solemnities performed, and the sittings of his Sanhedrim allowed. How was this? We can only account for it on the interpretation that the period "until" which the "sceptre" was not to depart from Judah, was the period which included the two events: the coming of Shiloh, and the gathering of the people to Him. The first event had come to pass, but the second had yet to be fulfilled. The fact that was to mark the commencement of that period had already been seen, but the child Shiloh was to grow into manhood; He was to exercise a ministry; He was to be crucified; He was to rise to His heavenly throne; He was to send out His messengers to the whole human community, before that fact could evolve which was to mark its close. Bear in mind that the word rendered "people" is plural, and may be translated "nations," meaning the Gentile nations: and these nations had to be made acquainted with Christ before they could come to Him. Hence the words, "The gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all the world, as a witness to all nations, and then shall the end come," that is, the end foreshown by Jacob, the end of Judah's separate and organized existence. But soon as all this had been effected; soon as the Gentiles, from

the east and the west, from the north and from the south, began to press into His kingdom; soon as was commenced that gathering of the people to Him which is still going on, and will go on to the end of time,—the stroke of judgment lighted on Jerusalem, the temple was turned into ashes, and that which had been hitherto a distinct nation became a race of wanderers scattered beyond possibility of recall or tribal identification. To borrow the language of another:* "The mighty explosion burst which tore in shreds each Hebrew pedigree, and left not a Jew within fifty miles of Bethlehem. The blaze of a great catastrophe dispersed the Jewish people all over the world, confusing all their families, consuming all their genealogies, and making it utterly impossible that another Shiloh should come out of Judah." †

* Dr. James Hamilton.

† Our missionaries frequently report the effect which the consideration of this fact has on the minds of thoughtful Jews. The following instance is taken from the report of the Bible Society for 1860:—

"One day the Jewish reader brought unexpectedly seven Jews and Jewesses to the house of Mr. Wiley, who sent them to Dr. Duff of the Free Church. As these Jews and Jewesses did not understand English or Bengalee, Mr. Hawkins, who was in this country, and myself, were appointed interpreters between Dr. Duff and the Jewish brethren. For two or three years these Jews had searched the Old Testament prophecies and compared them with the history of Jesus as given by the Evangelists. They were struck when reading the prophecy of Jacob regarding Judah, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." They reasoned thus in their minds: The Jews believed that Shiloh was no other person than the Messiah; that Jerusalem has been utterly destroyed, and the Jews have been scattered to the ends of the earth. Since that time the house of Israel had no sceptre, no lawgiver. If the Shiloh had not come before the destruction of Jerusalem, or

IV. This announcement is connected with a statement showing IN WHAT WAY HIS PEOPLE WILL COME TO HIM. "To Him shall the gathering of the people be." It is at once predictive and descriptive. It predicts the allegiance Christ will certainly receive, and it describes its quality. The peculiar colour of meaning that tints the original word is concealed by our translators under cover of a merely general epithet. The word rendered "gathering" includes the idea of obedience, but only of that obedience which is perfectly spontaneous and free. In the only other case where it occurs in the Scriptures it is used to express the kind of obedience that a child should pay to his mother.* Under the influence of such a principle will the people be "gathered round the standard of Shiloh." When the first Napoleon was a captive, restlessly pacing the platform of the island-rock which was then his prison, and was afterwards his grave, he one morning told his companion that he

before the dispersion of the Jews, Moses must then be a false prophet. They came to the conclusion that it was impossible that Moses could be a false prophet; hence they concluded that the opinion entertained by the Jews must be an erroneous one. This was the process of reasoning which sprung up in their minds, and which ended in their conversion to God. In a few years two of them died, and while lying, in the last stage of disease, in the Government Hospital, they were severely tried by their countrymen, who endeavoured to induce them to apostatize and to deny Jesus Christ, but they remained faithful to the last, and they died in peace."

* "Loving obedience." "Reverent obedience to a mother," Prov. xxx. 17. Dr. Pusey's translation.

had been reading the New Testament, and had been struck with the contrast between Christ's mode of gathering the people and the mode adopted by Alexander, Cæsar, and himself. No wonder that he felt the contrast. They were princes of war, Christ is the prince of peace. The people gathered to them from terror, they gather to Him from love. To them they were driven, to Him they are drawn. In the one case we see forced conscription, in the other free obedience. We see no strings of weeping captives dragged against their will after the conquering chariot of Christ. "His people are willing in the day of his power." They are bound; but the very stroke that binds them sets them free; they are bound, not in captivity, but in captivation; they are bound, yes, in the same sense, though to an infinite degree, as you are bound when you say to a generous friend, "I am unspeakably obliged!" The very first act that has spiritual life in it is under this law. "This is the command of God, that we should believe on him whom he hath sent." Then to believe is to obey. "Come," says Christ, "Come, ye wanderers, come home to me; come, ye weary ones, and I will give you rest; come, every one that thirsteth, and I will give him to drink of the river of the water of life freely!" After such invitations have gone forth, the act of coming is an

act of obedience. Do you plead that you have no power to obey? It is true that as there can be no natural action without the concurrence of nature, there can be no spiritual act without the concurrence of the spirit. But every one who is in earnest knows that when Christ calls He draws. "Come!" says the sea to the river. "Come!" says the magnet to the steel. "Come!" says the Spring to the sleeping life of field and forest. And like the obedience of the river to the sea, like the obedience of the steel to the stone, like the obedience of the earth's charmed atoms to Spring's effectual call, is the obedience of the soul to Christ's word and spirit. "This is His way," said Luther to Erasmus, "just as a father calls his feeble child to him, and says, 'Will you come, my son? come, then, come!' in order that the child may learn to call for his assistance, and allow himself to be carried." So Jesus gathers the lambs in His arms. We may not be able to distinguish the secret moment, the agony-point of concern, alarm, and blank despairing weakness, in which, roused by His call and drawn by His mystic attraction, the soul first goes forth to meet Him; but we know it to be the first moment in the history of an endless life, that in its essence delights to do His will, and that the act which marks it is the first act of spiritual obedience.

Then begins the aspiration to obey Him—to obey with the thought, to obey with the will, to obey with the understanding, to obey with all the powers of the soul; to obey with the eye, with the ear, with the lip, with the hand, with the foot, and with all the powers of the body. Change of worlds will only make this aspiration perfect, free it from the last impediment, and link us in eternal companionship with intelligences who "obey understandingly, sincerely, fully, readily, delightfully, unweariedly, and concordantly."*

> "For when yon heavens have passed away,
> We still shall glory to obey."

V. This statement suggests an enquiry into THE DESIGN OF CHRIST in gathering the people to Himself. In harmony with His title as "the Peaceful One," His grand design is to give them *rest.*

1. *Rest, by reconciling them to God.* When in "the obedience of faith" we come to Him, we come to God, for "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to

* Baxter.

God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* We, who were once afar off, are brought nigh by the blood of Christ, and thus there is secured for us the primary condition of rest.

2. *Rest, by effecting the spiritual union of man with man.* It is obvious that in the very act of gathering the nations to Himself, He will bring them nearer to each other. Lines draw nearer to each other as they approach the common centre to which they tend. While, unit by unit, the individuals who compose the nations come near Christ, national animosities will die, the affections of brotherhood will strengthen, and the power of the gospel will destroy war by destroying the causes of war. "Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

But there is another application of the words before us which we shall do well to make. It may seem a little incongruous to apply this grand and venerable text to a modern ecclesiastical question, but, in reality, the right way to apply any scripture doctrine is to apply it to the questions of to-day and we shall be right if we so apply this as to learn from it the principle on which the followers of Shiloh are to be united. It will help us to find

* 2 Cor. v. 19—21.

out the Divine law of Christian union. Christian men have tried many schemes for making their union with each other more perfect, but all human schemes have been found wanting. They have sometimes tried the amalgamation of several ecclesiastical communities into one; but this in itself is a mere mechanical expedient, and may be accomplished without the least union of souls. Vital union must begin not from without but from within. Acts of uniformity have been tried. Fascinated by the splendid idea of ecclesiastical uniformity, and failing to bring it about by the simple force of truth, good men of a less enlightened day were eager to effect it by the power of parliament. The system they originated still continues to exist, but time has taught, what ought indeed to have been learned from a higher teacher, that any kind of religious union which is the mere result of political expediency, a union by law of the restless, dispersive, conflicting elements of the national thought and will—union of those elements in the sense of their being violently kept together by an iron bond of externalism, is only like the union of incongruous ingredients bound up in a fire-shell, still while dead, but liable at the touch of a spark to explode, and scatter desolation. The laws of denominational attraction have been tried. Perhaps deno-

minational unions have not yet done their work. Certain it is that every man ought to be fully persuaded in his own mind respecting those tenets which are the distinctive signs of the denominations. It is possible that he may upon the whole best serve the interests of truth and love by acting most immediately in concert with other men, whose views on these lesser things most coincide with his own; but let every one watch against the subtle growth in his heart of mere denominationalism, lest, as it was said of Burke—

> "He narrowed his mind,
> And gave to a party what he meant for mankind,"

he should, before he is aware, "narrow his mind," and give to one particular section of Christians what belongs to all the Church. For, be sure the Church of Christ is not shut up within the walls of a denomination. The centre of union is not a sectarian crotchet, but Christ. Not to the chair of Saint Peter, not to the banner of an establishment, not to the shibboleth of a sect, but "to Him shall the gathering of the people be." By bringing us nearer to Himself He seeks to bring us nearer to each other. Near the father, the child is near the other children who are gathered round the father's knee; and if I am near Christ, I am near to any

other man who is near Christ. The same hope fires us, the same life circulates in us both, and if you touch Him you touch me. There may be endless diversities of thought, profession, and observance prevailing amongst those who from all nations are gathering round Christ; let them prevail; what is circumstantial will not disturb what is essential. In grace, as in nature, what is various may be harmonious, what is manifold may be one. Many branches, one tree; many stones, one temple; many gems, one crown; many tribes, one commonwealth. The great principle of union is union with Christ. The great secret of mutual nearness is nearness to the Fountain of our common life. When we gather to Him we gather to each other. He is gathering the people to Himself that, by a process most simple, natural, and necessary in its working, He may bring the scattered members of His family together, and hush its distractions into rest.

3. *Rest, by leading us to perfect rest in another world.*

One night, ages ago, a fire broke out in an American wilderness. A spark dropped on dry leaves, the lighted leaves flew before the wind, the flames raced along the grass and glanced from tree to tree, till all the forest was ablaze, and night was

turned into a terrible day. Certain Indians, driven out of their hunting-grounds by the red storm, fled for their lives; hour after hour they ran, and ran on until, half dead with fatigue, they reached a noble river: they forded it, and, after scaling the opposite bank, their chief struck his tent-pole into the ground, threw himself on the cool turf, and cried *Alabama!* "Here we may rest."

But that chief was no prophet. The land was claimed by hostile tribes. The fugitives reached no resting-place there. They were soon beset by foes more relentless than the elements; having escaped the fury of the fire, they perished from the cruelty of man, and where they looked for the still delight of a home, found but the quiet of a grave.

Let this tradition serve as a parable. Earth has no Alabama for the soul. In flight from year to year, chased from refuge to refuge in which they set their hearts, the fugitives from trouble often say, as they reach the shelter of wealth, or the shadow of domestic affection, or the shrine of some false worship, or the realization of some cherished hope, "Here we may rest;" but God says "*No*" to that, and again and again, when they are on the point of sinking into deceptive repose, does He send the stern angels of calamity to wake them up

with the cry, "Arise, depart, for this is not your rest!"

It is true that even in this world there is rest for those who have gathered themselves to Shiloh; rest through reconciliation with God, rest through union with reconciled men. Yet in our relation to God the joy of faith is often broken by unbelief, and in our relation to each other discordance of thought is often allowed to break the fellowship of love. When we have enjoyed an hour of the soul's calm sunshine sin soon breaks our tranquillity, infirmity breaks it, human unkindness breaks it, or it is broken by some storm of sorrow. On earth our rest is at best imperfect, but there is rest in heaven, for Shiloh is there; there in full and visible manifestation, the brightness of its glory and the secret of its rest, and there at last to Him will the gathering of His people be.

THE ANGEL IN THE BURNING BUSH.

III.

"Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

"And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

"And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

"And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

"And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

"Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

"And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

"And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; * * * *

"Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.

"And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

"And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; * * * *

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: * * * * Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."—EXODUS iii. 1–14.

The Angel in the Burning Bush.

THIS narrative is a chain of glorious wonders. Let us examine it, link by link. Here we see :—

I. AN OLD MAN CALLED TO GO OUT ON THE GREAT ERRAND OF HIS LIFE.

The education of Moses for the great mission of his life lasted eighty years. He was forty years in college, court, or camp, acquiring all the wisdom of Egypt; after that he was forty years in the calm retreat and silent shade of a shepherd's life in Midian; while watching his flocks, revolving higher themes, walking with God, inhaling the spirit of truth, communing with his own heart, and being still. When the brightness of his life was gone, and the hopes of his youth were dead, buried, and forgotten; when his fiery spirit was tamed into patience, and his turbulent passion stilled into solemn repose,—at last, an old man of

eighty, he came out of school. Then, but not until then, was he openly consecrated as God's missionary to rescue the Israelites from their grinding bondage and their great despair; to organize them into a nation, to give them their holy laws, and to be their leader along a pathway of miracle to the Promised Land. From the hour when an infant three months old his tears touched the pity of Pharaoh's daughter, to the hour when a white-haired sage he trembled before the burning bush, God had been training him for his predestined work. Not a lesson had been left, not a moment had been lost, for he needed the weary discipline and gathered force of all those quiet years, before he could obey his high vocation, and do his great work well.

So does the Being of infinite leisure and almighty resources still prepare His instruments and unfold His bright designs. We need not travel far for illustrations. In darkness, underneath the January rime and frost, He is even while we speak getting ready the royal glories of June.* The flower that is to flow open to the sun at a certain hour six months hence, He has even now in hand. By silent and mystical touches He is already educating the tree to bear its autumnal

* Preached, January 10, 1864.

clusters, and it is His ordination that there shall be eleven months of husbandry for one month of harvest. In the spiritual field you may trace the action of the same law. Man is often in haste; God, never. We would give the largest measure of time to *results;* He gives the largest measure to preparations. We burn with eagerness to bring our instrumentalities into action, for we are apt to value that agent most whose work makes most show in a report, or whose life is longest before the public eye. He, on the contrary, often brings His most honoured servants through a long strain of trial and a long path of obscurity to fit them for some short service that is, after all, unknown to human fame; for a single word spoken in a breath, or a single deed, over and done in a day, may heighten the joy of heaven, and break into issues that will flow on for ever. Years may be needful to prepare you for saying "Yes" or "No" in some one critical moment, and many a man may be in training all his life for the work of life's last hour. We sometimes try to reap in sowing time, but He never sends forth fruit until the season is fitted for the fruit, and the fruit for the season; and so, "when the fulness of time was come"—the hour being ready for the man, and the man for the hour—God sent forth Moses.

II. THE BURNING BUSH FROM WHICH THAT CALL WAS SOUNDED. Moses saw "a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed."

1. *This was a sign to indicate the peculiar presence of God.* When in the days of old He was pleased to give to any one man some new promise, or to send him on some grand errand which had no precedent, and for which there existed no written law; to show that the Speaker was in reality God, and to confirm His claim to be obeyed as God He was wont to work a miracle. This miracle was *God's mark*—the proof of His presence, the seal of His servant's commission. As might have been expected, a token of this kind authenticated the call of Moses. It was a splendid wonder, such as the extraordinary case required. Up and away in that silent spot, where perhaps no mortal footfall had ever been heard before, a bush burning to ashes in common fire would have been a startling and arrestive sight. As the sparks flew upwards, and showers of black leaves rustled along the grass, the lonely looker-on might have wondered what hand of mystery had kindled the fire; but for the bush to burn, to burn on with inextinguishable fury, and yet, wrapt in burning waves, for each soft leaflet and each trembling thread of vegetation to shine

through the clear sheet of eddying flame, and fresh and green, as if it only rejoiced in the sunlight and wavered in the dewy breeze—how was this? He could not account for it. He was broad awake. Keenly alive in every power, and rich with all the science of the day, he could not be deceived. It was no magical show, it was no dreamy picture in the brain, it was no mere idea, striking for the moment with the force of a sensation. Glowing, half with fear, half with wonder, he was drawing near to the mysterious glory, when a voice from the midst of it twice pronounced his own name. The secret was open now. What he saw was the banner of the King, the sign of His immediate presence. Out of that fire only God could speak. "He trembled, and durst not behold."*

2. The burning bush, like all other Divine manifestations, was as appropriate as it was impressive. While it was a sign that testified God's presence, *it was a symbol of His people*, eminently adapted to encourage the prophet in undertaking their cause. He may not have been able to take in all its profound meaning at once; but gradually, as in solitary hours he thought on what he had seen, the truth would steal over his mind, that the elect people, though surrounded by the burning forces of tyranny,

* Acts vii. 32.

had God in the midst of them, and could not be consumed. Later predictions and events have made this truth plain to all the world. The national tree was to outlive that fierce blaze. It was to live on till a psalmist should sing, "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt, thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs to the sea, and her branches to the river." It suffered many fiery trials, and even when the poet had thus told its past story, he added in description of what was to him its present appearance: "It is burned with fire; they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance."* But this was only as it seemed to human view. Egypt has been consumed; Tyre has been consumed; Philistia has been consumed; all the great nations of antiquity have burnt out, and we see only the dead ashes of what was once superb and mighty life; but in defiance of every destructive element Israel lives, and still will live, a separate people to the end of time. This truth is the shadow of a higher truth. Whatever may alarm, whatever may assail, no divinely redeemed

* Psalm lxxx. 8—11—16.

life can perish. While on earth, the device on its shield will be "The Burning Bush," and its motto, "Troubled on every side, yet not destroyed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

III. THE ANGEL WHO UTTERED THIS CALL. We approach with lowly reverence to ask the question, "What is thy name?" The great Unseen, who said to the prophet, "Put thy sandals from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground," speaks to us and says, "Put off levity, put off pride, put off prejudice, put off exasperated opinion, and listen with eager and suspended soul to the teachings of God alone, respecting the mystery of God." When we are in this attitude, the speaker discovers Himself to us. We see at the first glance that He is Divine, for He wields prerogatives, displays Divine perfections, and accepts Divine honours. We next learn that He is an angel; we further find from a chain of Scripture proofs that He is *Christ*. Stephen, in his defence before the Sanhedrim, shows that the angel who appeared to Moses in the bush was the same angel "which spake to him on the Mount Sinai."* David, in his song at the settlement of the ark, shows that the angel who appeared on Mount Sinai was the

* Acts vii. 30—34, 35, 36—38.

same who afterwards ascended on high and received gifts for men. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is amongst them as on Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men."* Paul, in his message to the Ephesians, declares that He who thus ascended was Christ. "But unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. For he (David) saith, When he ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended? He that ascended is the same that also descended."† Then it was *Christ* who appeared to Moses.

Taking another path, we may reach the same conclusion. When in this or in any other scene of holy story we meet with One who wears the supreme name, yet holds a subordinate office—is God, yet sent by God; God, yet seen; God, yet heard; who is this "Traveller unknown"? Not the Divine Father, "for He dwelleth in secret." Besides, in the economy of grace the Father is evermore the sender, the Son, the sent. It must, therefore, be the Son. This thought is our only outlet from a maze of contradictions.

* Ps. lxviii. 17. † Eph. iv. 7—9.

Through all time, at first by His visits to our world as a celestial stranger; at last by His life as a man, Christ has been "the angel of the Lord." Too often the term "angel" has for us a cloudy and indeterminate meaning; but we should resolve to make it clear. We are apt to use it as a term of *race*, and to distinguish the natives of heaven as angels, just as we distinguish the natives of earth as men. But it is in reality a term of *office*, simply meaning an envoy, a messenger, one who is sent. Doubtless any heavenly being who is sent on an errand of love to this globe is for the time an angel; but One there is above all others who deserves the name of angel. Sent not only out from the unknown heavens, but out from the very essence and depth of the unknown God; sent to reveal God's heart; sent to translate the Divine nature into the conditions of human nature, and to make the Divine being not only conceivable by that which is finite, but approachable by that which is fallen; sent to discover and accomplish the Father's purposes of grace, and to fetch home to Him each lost and wandering child—Jesus is the Prince of Missionaries, "The Envoy extraordinary, the Evangelist supreme," the angel whom all other angels worship, and round whose throne thunders at this moment the mingled music of a numberless

company, ceasing not day and night to ascribe to Him all the glory of redemption.*

IV. THE COVENANT UNDER WHICH THE ANGEL GAVE HIM HIS COMMISSION. He came to fulfil an engagement in the form of a covenant which he had formerly made and frequently renewed with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: these fathers being regarded as the spokesmen and sponsors for their yet unborn descendants, who were according to that covenant chosen people set apart for a magnificent destiny. At this moment the realization of such a destiny seemed impossible. They were all slaves in Egypt, sunk both inwardly and outwardly to the lowest plane of degradation. But all this had been foreseen and provided for. On one occasion, when the promise was renewed to Abraham, and ratified by sacrifice, the oracle had said, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve

* "Who is that angel, but he who by the prophet is called the angel of the covenant? For, seeing to *evangelize*, in the Greek signifies to declare as an angel; our Lord, who delivers His message to us, is called an angel."—Gregory. *(Life of Moses.)*

I am aware that many eminent Christian teachers have thought it probable that "the angel of the Lord" was a created angel through whom God expressed His will. This was the opinion of Augustine, who says, "It is plain that all those objects seen by the fathers, when God was represented to them according to His own manifestation, as befitted those times, were wrought through the creature.—*(On the Trinity: B. iii.)* This Person (the Son) angelic nature could aforetime figure, in order to foreannounce.—*(Ib.* iv. 20.) "The angel was not the God of Abraham, but it was God who was speaking through the angel." —(Athanasius.) *Fourth Oration against the Arians.*

them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterwards they shall come out with great substance. . . . . But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."*

The four hundred years of trial had now run out, and the Promiser, true to the moment, came to accomplish His prophetic word. The angel said to Moses, "I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. . . . I have surely seen the affliction of my people . . and am come down to deliver them. . . . Go, gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers . . . appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt; and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt, unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey."† Such was the meaning of the Divine engagement on behalf of the Israelites, and such was its fulfilment, so far as it related to the particular affliction out of which Moses was

* Genesis xv. 13, 14–16. † Exodus iii. 6—8—16, 17.

to be the instrument of rescue. But this was only an incident—a lesser promise that was included in a greater—a mere step on the way to the bestowment of the blessings contemplated in the sweep of His grand and comprehensive covenant. They were freed from Egypt, that they might, in accordance with His word, multiply until they were countless as the stars; rise in power till they were lords of the land of Palestine, and finally be enriched with a supreme blessing which should make their nation a source of benediction to all the world.

The covenant made with "the seed of Abraham" had more than an earthly meaning. Voltaire and others ridicule the pomp of language in which the fortunes of so insignificant a people are predicted, and which glowingly dilates on their inheritance of a narrow strip of country which from end to end did not reach two hundred miles. On this they found an argument against the Bible. There would be force in it if those ancient words pointed to nothing beyond this visible life. But, as Archer Butler finely says when commenting on this objection, "The threats and promises of the prophets swell beyond the measure of the occasion, their voice is *too loud* for that little region,—it is made to fill a universe." The elders, who by faith "obtained

a good report," always knew this. "The glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another;" and they always made this distinction. They saw in the covenant more than a grant of soil, more than a charter of political rights, more than a guarantee of temporal salvation. It meant all this to the outward Israelite, but it meant more than this to the "Israelite indeed." Under typical forms it told him of provision, deliverance, and a land of rest for *souls*. The good things it actually gave were confirmed by its own proper sacrifices, having their virtue from the Divine appointment alone; the good things it promised were to be actually given by a future covenant which it typified, and were to be confirmed by a future sacrifice that should have its virtue from its own inherent fitness and infinite adequacy. All this has now been done,—done by the mighty Angel himself, who has appeared in our nature to make the new covenant, and who in that nature, midst shudderings of nameless agony, has, "by the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God." For this cause He is the Mediator of the New Covenant, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, the called ones might *obtain* the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there

must also of necessity be the death of the ratifying victim. For a covenant is of force over the *dead;* otherwise it has no force at all while the ratifying victim liveth."* More or less distinctly these things were seen "afar off" by the ancient fathers of the faithful—hence their epitaph, "These all died in faith, not having obtained the promises, but having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." † Spiritual men, you are of the same spiritual family! "They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."‡ "He is the father of all them that believe."§ "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."‖ Thus we read our title to the same inheritance, and trace out the fact that the story of the Burning Bush is no old-world story, a thing whose interest is "dead as the liturgies of Thebes"; but that all the truth conveyed by it is full of power for us, and is a revelation for to-day.

V. THE ANGEL'S NAME. By this time the Israelites had nearly forgotten the God of their fathers. As yet they had no priests, no types, no stated system of instruction. Thoughts of the Unseen

* Hebrews ix. 15, 16, 17.
† Hebrews xi. 13.
‡ Galatians iii. 9.
§ Romans iv. 11.
‖ Galatians iii. 29.

mainly reached them through the forms of heathen imagery. The atmosphere of their daily life tended to debase the very elements of all religion, and all that was true in their faith was but a spark now quivering at the very point of darkness. Moses, therefore, anticipated that when he appeared as a messenger of deliverance from the God of their fathers, they would ask, "What is his name?" Their first thought, perhaps, might be of *Amun*, and even if they thought of some national deity of their own, they would probably begin to contrive a way of "changing His glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass." To meet this difficulty at the outset of his enterprise, God said to His servant, "I AM THAT I AM." "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

So, in simple majesty, He reveals His name. It asserts His *real existence.* Other things have more of nonentity than of *being* in them. What they *are* bears no proportion to what they are *not.* But He is emphatically "The Being," and he can say in the highest sense—"I live," "I am."

It asserts His *underived existence.* Every other being is an effect, a product, a result. There was a period when the most ancient spirit in heaven *was not,* but there never was a time when He could not say—"I am."

It asserts His *independent existence.* Every other being lives by permission, and the most royal soul alive must say, "By the grace of God I am what I am;" but He, without any reserve or qualification, says—"I am."

It asserts His *eternity.* Setting aside every notion of time, which is successive, leaving out every thought of past and future, which as to God are not, He appropriates a name which involves it in some idea of an everlasting now. Through all the solitudes of space, and in every point of duration, His glory ever has been and ever will be silently repeating the affirmation—"I am."

It asserts His *unchangeableness,* for it can mean nothing less than that in the same sense He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; always—"I am."

It asserts His *ineffability.* It is a name solely denoting the abstract idea of God. A name that applies to Himself alone, to Himself apart from all relations to His creatures,—a dread, sublime, ineffable name. Idolatry could make nothing of it. It defies all attempts of man to interpret it by sign, or to materialize it into shape, colour, or sculptured stone.

Enlightened reason assents to this doctrine directly revelation teaches it. All nature is evermore responding to it:—

"Tell them I AM," Jehovah said
To Moses, while earth heard in dread,
And smitten to the heart,
At once above, beneath, around,
All nature, without voice or sound,
Replied, "O LORD, THOU ART."

It has been said that this truth, however indisputable, is not the precise truth conveyed in the words spoken to Moses, because these words in their literal import mean, "I will be that I will be," rather than "I am that I am." But even if we accept this rendering as the literal one, it seems to me to imply, at least indirectly, all the meaning that is expressed in the rendering of our authorized version. Only He who is the "I am" would have the right or power to say in such a significant sense, "I will be." Such words, not growing out of the thought held in such an appellation as "I am," would really signify nothing. They can have no denominating value whatever, except as uttered from the throne of that Being whose existence is real, underived, eternal, and changeless; who takes no impression from external things, is affected by no choice or power of any other being, who is necessarily absolute and independent, and who therefore ever will be what He is.*

* "As though God had said *Qui sum*, my name is *I am;* yet in truth it is *Qui ero*, my name is *I shall be.* Donne: Sermon LXXX. fol., 1640, p. 68.
Coleridge wrote the following note on this passage: "Nay, *I will or shall b*

But we cling to the translation as it stands in our English Bibles. Our translators, holding the doctrine that what is usually called the future tense of a Hebrew verb is in fact a doubtful tense-form, and that the circumstances and context must determine whether it is to signify time present or future, felt justified by the context here in giving the words "I am" as rendering the true force of the original, and however we may account for it, the sacred name seems ever to have been thus understood by the majority. So it seems to have been understood by the masters of old heathen philosophy, for the inscription "Thou art," graven over the gate of Apollo's temple at Delphi, looks like a remembrance of the great name placed over the gate of the Exodus. So the ancient Hebrews themselves appear to have understood it. So it is substantially rendered in all old versions. The very same name, with the very same significance, was appropriated by the redeeming Angel Himself when He was on our earth in the likeness of man. Adapting the translation of it given in the Septuagint, using the phrase as a

in that I will to be. I am that only one who is self-originant, *causa sui*, whose will must be contemplated as antecedent in idea to, or deeper than his own co-eternal being. But 'antecedent,' 'deeper,' etc., are mere *vocabula impropria*, words of accommodation, that may suggest the idea to a mind purified from the intrusive phantoms of space and time, but falsify and extinguish the truth if taken as adequate exponents.

proper name, and taking it as His own, He said, "*I am*—the eternal, independent one—was before Abraham."* "If ye believe not that *I am*, ye shall die in your sins." It seems to point to His Divine nature, and to signify the eternal life of the Eternal Word, "who was, and is, and is to come," the Almighty.

VI. THE EFFECT TO BE WROUGHT BY THE REMEMBRANCE OF HIS NAME.

1. It was intended to inspire *profoundest reverence* for the Being to whom it belongs. It is a fact that has already been incidentally touched upon, that this was one of the first effects designed to be produced in the heart of the elected nation. It was to lift the Israelites above idolatrous and materialistic notions of God. But the perverse inclination of our nature to stop at the letter and lose sight of the spirit, often led them to pay superstitious reverence to the mere verbal sign, while they were unimpressed by the great idea that shone beyond it. The name "Jehovah," of which the name spoken to Moses was the synonym and fuller revelation, was held sacred, while God Himself was forgotten, or thought of only as a

* John viii. 58. In this case ἐγὼ εἰμὶ is used as an indeclinable noun, and the full construction is Δέγω πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ γενέσθαι. See Dr. John Brown's Commentary on this passage, "Discourses of our Lord," vol II. 79.

kind of local Deity. "The four-lettered name," as it was called, was never to be pronounced from the desk of the presiding scribe in the synagogue. After the captivity it was only to be pronounced once a year, and that by the High Priest alone. After the destruction of the temple it was never pronounced at all. It was at once deemed to be a holy talisman, a kind of magical secret, attainable only by the greatest and most sainted of mortals, and, uttered by their lips, was supposed to work wonders. But now, we are told, its true pronunciation is lost. The Rabbis ask why the prayers of Israel are not now heard? and this answer is given: "Alas! they do not know the *Shem Hamphorash*, the true sound of the word Jehovah."

There are nominal Christians whose principle is substantially the same. They impose upon themselves by a similar reverence for mere words, surfaces, and shows. Their religion is a body without the soul. With them the great name is a sound, and a sound only, and though they would not lightly utter that sound, the thought of God's name rouses no adoring thoughts of His nature. If there are some amongst us whose sin is identical with that of the superstitious Talmudist, there are others who may by that very superstition be put to shame, for ignorant reverence is better than

fluent flippancy. The scrupulousness of the synagogue is more seemly than the language of bold and fond endearment in which some men speak to God as they would not dare to speak to man. The man who is afraid to utter the name of God is worthy of more honour than the man who ventures to speculate on the mysteries which that name stands for, merely as a naturalist would speculate on a problem in science. The thought of such rash familiarity or such cold irreverence compelled the soul of one who never dreamt that his words would ever be quoted in a church, to burst out with the apostrophe : "O awful, awful name of God ! light unbearable ! mystery uufathomable ! vastness immeasurable ! Who are there who come forward to explain the mystery, and gaze unblinking into the depths of the light, and measure the immeasurable vastness to a hair ! O name, that God's people of old did fear to utter ! O light, that God's prophet would have perished had he seen ! who are those now so familiar with it ?"*

2. *It reveals the Infinite sufficiency of a Christian's Portion.* Understanding the great "I AM" to pledge Himself for the future as Israel's covenanted God, we may conceive in this way the term to bespeak a covenant relationship. Knowing His

* W. M. Thackeray, in a Review.

glory, and keeping in view His solemnly ratified engagement, the prophet of Horeb could not fear that the supplies provided for the future life of the nation would be unsuitable or inadequate. Those who are related to Him by the bonds of a better covenant, established on better promises, have at least equal grounds for confidence. Ever remember, Christians, that the name of your own God is "I am." All Scripture authenticates the deduction that He who is this is absolutely perfect. His power is omnipotence, His knowledge is omniscience, His faithfulness is "without variation or shadow of turning"; He is not only living, He is life. He is not only loving, He is love. He is not only rich, but all true riches are in Him, as rays are in the focus, or streams are in the fountain. Grasp the magnificent fact that, in some way not capable of being fully expressed in words, this God is yours. Write the name which He desires you to know Him by, and ponder its comprehensive meaning as the name of your Portion.*

* "All are not taken! There are left behind
Living belovèds, tender looks to bring,
And make the daylight still a blessed thing,
And tender voices, to make soft the wind.
But if it were not so; if I could find
No love in all the world to answer me,
Nor any pathway but rang hollowly
Where 'dust to dust,' the love from life disjoined—
And if with parched lips, as in a dearth
Of water-springs the very deserts claim,

"He does not say 'I am your light, your life your tower, your strength,' but only, '*I am.*' He sets His hand as it were to a blank, that you may write under it what you please that shall be for your good. As if He should say, 'Are you weak? I AM strength. Are you sick? I AM health. Are you in trouble? I AM comfort. Are you poor? I AM riches. Are you dying? I AM life. Have you nothing? I AM all things. I AM justice and mercy. I AM grace and goodness. I AM glory, beauty, holiness, eminency, supremacy, perfection, all-sufficiency, eternity—JEHOVAH. I AM whatsoever is suitable to your nature, or convenient for your conditions. I AM whatsoever is amiable for yourself or desirable for your soul. Whatever is pure and holy, whatever is great and pleasant, whatever is good and needful to make you happy, that I AM.' So that, in short, God here represents Himself to us as one universal good; and leaves us to make the application to ourselves according to our several wants, capacities, and desires; He only saying in the general—I AM."*

3. *It gives encouragement to Evangelical enterprise.*

I uttered to those sepulchres unmoving
The bitter cry, 'Where are ye, O my loving?'
I know a voice would sound, 'Daughter, I AM!'
Can I suffice for heaven, and not for earth?"

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

* Bishop Beveridge.

Every Christian has his own mission in the world, distinct and divine as was that of Moses. To each one, however small and secret the sphere of his life may be, who in that sphere is trying for Christ's sake to work deeds of love, or to show forth the precious revelations of the Gospel, it may be said with as much certainty as in the case of Israel's ancient leader, "I AM hath sent you." It may be most emphatically said to the man who has given himself away to the one work of publishing the glad tidings in distant lands. Brother, the Divine formula, which we have been attempting to interpret, seems to bring out the full glory of Christ's promise to you, "Lo, I AM with you alway, even to the end of the world." All the powers of that great name combine to sanction your errand, are held in reserve for your assistance, and stand in pledge for the ultimate ascendancy of the cause to which you are solemnly devoted. The Pharaoh whom you dare to challenge, and from whose grasp you are to wrest your enslaved brothers, is Sin. Contrast the meaning of this name with the meaning of His name under whose banner you go. It is not a personal name. Sin is not a being. It has its root in nothingness; it is privation, it is defection from the law.* It is the absence of what

* 1 John iii. 4, Ἀνομία.

ought to be present.* Man's sinful actions are but the actions of man when *without* God in the world. You aim to rescue man from weakness; weakness is the absence of strength. You aim to rescue him from darkness; darkness is the absence of light. You aim to overthrow idolatry; "We know that an idol is nothing in the world"; and that for which the dumb sculpture stands is only a phantom haunting the mind of the devotee. Now, you advance against all this manifold evil in the name of "I AM." That name carries in itself a prophecy of victory. The warfare in which you are taking part is the conflict of being with nonentity; of the real with the illusive; and who can doubt what the end will be? The living God goes with you, and with each faithful herald of His Gospel, by the influence of His Spirit, giving men strength for weakness, light for darkness, and life for death, as well as freely pardoning, for the sake of the ordained sacrifice, all those actions which they have wrought while left to themselves. The issue of all this will be that the world, now so "empty of His praise," will be "filled with His glory, as the waters cover the sea."

* "Created nature is a subsistence capable of both moral good and evil. It is capable of goodness by a participation of that good Being by whom it was created; but it is capable of moral evil, not by a participation of any substantial evil, but by the privation of good. To deny this, is giving inexpressible advantage to the Manicheans, those enemies to the faith."—August. contra Julianum Pelagianum.

In the starlight, forty years ago, an officer was wandering round a pagoda in Rangoon, when he heard, sounding from its tower, the strain of an English psalm-tune. Startled by the mystery, he resolved to follow the sound to its source. Entering the building, and winding his way upwards, he at last opened the door of a large inner chamber, when the sound ceased. There, with his open Bible before him, and a hundred soldiers around, stood the noble General Havelock, proclaiming to his audience the words of eternal life. Ranged round the walls, feet crossed, and hands resting in symbol of silent repose, were images of Boodha, and each god held in his lap a lighted lamp. The dumb, helpless idols were, in the very sanctum of their own ancient and splendid worship, made to serve as lamp-bearers to a Christian assembly; and a temple, for ages the glory of the heathen city, was now "none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven." The scene, impressive in itself, was infinitely inspiring when looked upon as an earnest and a type of the mighty change that shall be witnessed, when in every idolatrous land the "vanities of the Gentiles" shall all vanish before the presence and Spirit of the great "I AM."

CAPTAIN OF THE LORD'S HOST.

IV.

"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him, with his sword drawn in his hand; and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?

"And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant?

"And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."—JOSHUA v. 13—15.

Captain of the Lord's Host.

THE march was over. The Jordan had been forded. Up, through the long, steep jungle at the river's edge the tribes had shorn their way, and were now at last fairly encamped in Canaan. To their eyes, still aching with the glare of the desert, the scene that now opened was one of enchanting freshness and glory:—

> It was a scene divine,
> A blending of all beauties, streams and dells,
> Fruit, foliage, crag, wood, cornfield, mountain, vine.

But their warfare was not yet accomplished; not yet were they to enter into rest. They had come to the end of one great chapter in Providence, but were only at the beginning of another, and their next difficulty seemed insurmountable. Right in the middle of their path, five miles onward, towering above the palm-groves, rose in

massive strength the fortified city of Jericho. It was the key of the country, and before they could open the country to take possession of the heritage their God had given them they had to take that key. They had to take it, or fail utterly; to take it, or perish at the very threshold of their enterprise. How was this to be done? Having always lived in the level wilderness, they had never stormed a castle, had never even seen one. We may be sure that this hour of pause was to their leader an hour of prayer, an hour of exalted life, an hour of keen watchfulness for the signals of Divine direction. In this mood he went forward alone to reconnoitre the place. While he was there, thinking and thinking, all at once there glimmered in the twilight over against him the figure of "a man with a drawn sword in his hand." What was it? Dream of the night, or spirit of the dead, solid form or unsubstantial vapour, man or angel, friend or foe,—Joshua knew not, but he was ready for the encounter. Simple as a child, fearless as "one of the immortals," he looked the Mystery in the face, and challenged the unknown warrior with the question, "Art thou with us, or with our adversaries?" The answer was "Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did

worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so." Such is the narrative before us. Let us view it—

I. AS DESCRIBING AN ANTICIPATORY APPEARANCE OF CHRIST.

When, at any time in the spiritual history of this world, religious worship has been offered to any holy or glorious personage, human or angelic, it has ever been repelled and reproved in a moment. When the Lystrians were about to do sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, mistaking them for the fabulous deities, Zeus and Hermes, come down in the likeness of men, the two apostles cried out in terrified haste, "Sirs, why do ye these things? we also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein."* When John, bewildered amidst the rushing splendours of the revelation made to him in Patmos, was about to worship an angel, the angel said to him, "See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the

* Acts xiv. 15.

prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God."* But when Joshua fell in the attitude of worship before the still shape of light that stood over against him like "a man with a drawn sword in his hand," he was commanded to observe the signs of a yet profounder veneration. "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy." Come, see a man who requires and receives the worship which is due to God alone; is not this the Christ?

Allied to our nature by engagement and anticipation, Christ occasionally assumed its prophetic semblance before He dwelt on earth in actual incarnate life. The Hebrew fathers sometimes met in lonesome spots of the primæval woods and vales, sometimes saw standing by their altars, a mysterious stranger. A man like themselves, he seemed to be, and therefore they at first felt no surprise, as they would have felt no surprise at the first sight of any other man. Yet by degrees his presence filled them with a nameless dread, and a violent wonder; woke up within them the sense of the infinite, and constrained them to give him instinctively the deepest worship of their souls. That mysterious stranger must have been "the Word," who afterwards was made flesh, and dwelt

* Rev. xxii. 9.

amongst men; for the Scriptures tell of no other person who is divine, yet has a human manifestation, of no other person wearing the form of man who has the power to kindle and the right to command man's worship. In reality he was not "a man" before he was born in Bethlehem. It was no face of clay that looked upon the wondering worshipper, it was no human voice that sounded; that form was a form only, a phenomenon that could come and go unaccountably, flash into distinctness, or melt into viewless air, or vanish in the sacrificial flame. It was not the body, but only the appearance of a man that waited there, and our point is, that he who thus appeared was Christ. We recognize Christ in the traveller who, with his two companions, once rested under the leafy shades of Mamre; at first welcomed as a weary brother, at last worshipped as "Judge of all the earth," and implored by Abraham to spare the guilty cities of the plain.* We recognize Christ in the marvellous scene of Jacob's life where "there wrestled a man with him till break of day," the scene which Jacob reviewed with the exclamation of astonishment, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved!" We recognize Christ as the supernatural Man who appeared in the histories of

* Compare Genesis xviii. 1—3, 16, 17, 22, xix. 1.

Manoah, as of other ancient worthies, and we recognize Him here.

The purposes of God always unfold by progressive and orderly stages. He does nothing by abrupt impulses and sudden starts; and as it was His purpose to appear on earth in human form, it was like Him that He should gradually prepare the way for that appearance, that He should make the human mind familiar with the great idea, and that by anticipatory advents in the likeness but not in the reality of our nature, He should waken up the world to behold the crowning miracle of all revelation—"God manifest in the flesh."

II. View this narrative AS FORESHADOWING A PECULIAR RELATION THAT SUBSISTS BETWEEN CHRIST AND HIS FOLLOWERS.

1. See the *fact* of this relation. That we may see it clearly, let us try to find the power of the terms employed to designate respectively Him and them. *They* are "the Lord's Host"; *He* is their "Captain."

(1) They are *the Lord's Host.* In Old Testament story incidents were often parables. Very often while the words spoken were adapted to fit the immediate occasion, they had an onward look, held truth wide as human nature, were meant for the ear of all the world, and were only to be fully deciphered by the men of the future. This is an

instance. The "Lord's host," when Joshua heard the phrase, meant Israel; but now, Israel means the Church.

The Church is a host on account of its *numbers*.

> "'The dust of Jacob,' who can count!
> Or measure its sublime amount;
> That 'goodly fellowship,' th' anointed Host,
> The heroes of the Holy Ghost."*

The Church is a host on account of its *unity*. Under all diversities of thought, of aspect, and of tribal distinction, faith sees the indivisibility of one life, one interest, one line of march, and one prize of victory.

The Church is a host on account of its *order*, for the term "host," as applied to it, suggests the idea of a community in a state of discipline, orderly arrangement, and readiness for martial action, such as might inspire the witness to say, "Who is this that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?"

(2) Of this Host, Christ is the *Captain*.

Captain by *sanction of law*. "I have set my king on my holy hill of Zion"; I have laid help upon him that is mighty, I have exalted one chosen out of the people"; Behold my servant whom I uphold,

* J. Montgomery.

mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment unto the Gentiles." However in the dark we still must be as to the interior relations of the Infinite one, whose glory no understanding can pierce, however at a loss to show how the Son can be identical in nature with the Father, and yet subordinate in office, these proclamations make it plain that having in wonderful love to man consented to sustain that office, He is confirmed in it by the authority of the Will that gives law to all creation.

Captain *by the suffrage of the army.* "Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, *and appoint themselves* one head, and they shall come out of the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel."* Thus, casting Christian thought into the moulds of Jewish language, an ancient prophet was instructed to convey the idea that the warriors of the cross should have no Captain forced upon them against their will, or without their intelligent approval. He whom God appoints, "they appoint themselves"; that is, they acquiesce in His appointment, and there is in this respect a perfect coincidence between His choice and theirs.

* Hosea i. 11.

Captain *through all time.* The words of the title claimed by the Saviour in His interview with Joshua seem to fill out and brighten into grander significance with the light of each advancing age By terms answering to these is He revealed with growing splendour throughout the Bible. Not only do we meet with them in the martial imageries peculiar to the prophet, but in the calm discourses of apostles and evangelists. In evident allusion to the history before us, Paul says, "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings";* and in the book that closes the canon of inspiration there is a stately description of Christ as captain of the Lord's Host, riding forth to the last battle of which this world shall be the scene: "I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew but he himself: and he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon

* Heb. ii. 10.

white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall smite them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."*

2. See the *consequences* of this relation.

(1) As Captain of the Lord's host, *Christ summons His people to a life of warfare.* In "the book of the wars of the Lord" we read of a field in which Christ fought for us, not as a Captain leading others, but as a Champion standing alone. This warfare of championship is alluded to in a dialogue recorded on the page of prophecy: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will

* Rev. xix. 11—16.

stain all my raiment. For the day of my vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me."* In the wilderness, in the garden, at the judgment-hall, and on the cross, He met in His own single strength the enemies into whose power our sins had sold us, conquered them, and achieved the right to rescue all who trust Him from the dominion of the primal curse.

But it is of another warfare that we now would speak. Set free by Christ, we enlist under His banners, and from that point, and assured of eventual victory, we fight our way all through the enemy's land, to maintain the freedom already won.

"It is an easy thing to be a Christian," you sometimes hear it said; "a sinner has only to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and at once he is saved." Beware of half-truths. It is true that by one simple act of faith we enter the Christian state; but it is also true that we must, by one long warfare of faith, maintain the Christian life. "An easy thing to be a Christian," is it? Say rather, in the stern words of a Puritan hero, "Soon as

* Isaiah lxiii. 1—5.

the true life is born it has all hell to fight with." "An easy thing to be a Christian?" When that true type of a Christian, the pilgrim told of in the great modern parable, was furnished from the palace armoury with a sword, a shield, a helmet, and a breastplate, these things were not given him only as weights to carry, or as toys to trifle with, or as relics to be sacredly kept in stainless and beautiful splendour, or as gay decorations for parade. That sword was to be used against Apollyon; that shield was to catch the fiery dart; that marvellous weapon of "all-prayer" was wanted in "the Valley of the Shadow of Death"; and all that armour, so lustrous in the sunshine, was soon to be stained in the storm and dinted in the fray. "An easy thing to be a Christian?" Ask a Christian. Ask Paul or David, and then study their deep self-revelations. Ask that Christian teacher whose words, perhaps, have inspirited the fainting faith of thousands, and whose own faith seems never to have felt a vibration: he could tell you that many a time while you slept he has been haunted by "spectral doubts that made him cold," or has fought all night with subtle errors that "were conquered at last in no martial posture, but on his knees." * Ask that Christian whose life seems to

* Sir Thomas Brown.

soar in serene spirituality high above this common world, more like the life of an angel than a man: he could tell you that every day he has "his own body for his antagonist," and is tortured with almost ceaseless fears of falling at last before some gigantic sin of the senses, like him who said, "I shall one day perish by the hand of this Saul." Ask that meek man who seems passionless almost to a fault: he could tell you that all that calm comes through conflict; that he has habitually to wrestle down the fiery impulse of his temper, and to hold back with all his strength wrong words, which in the hot flush of the moment almost seem to be noble and right. Ask that man in whose conduct grace is scarcely visible through the repellancies of mortal infirmity, and whom Charity herself almost hesitates to call a Christian. According to your estimate there is only a spark of religion there, and that, you think, at least is easy to maintain. But, supposing your estimate to be right, it is not an easy thing to maintain a spark. I think, however, that it is likely to be wrong. Perhaps the measure of grace which in that man gleams like a dying spark, would in another man, with a happier organization, shine like a brilliant flame. There is so much in his idiosyncrasy tending to choke and damp the fire of a better

life, that much of the force which in another case would be spent outwardly in a work of performance, is in his case spent inwardly in a mere work of resistance. Man sees what is done; God alone sees what is resisted. If that poor man, so stern, so wayward, so full of singularities, that call forth the scorn of the weak or the pity of the wise, could tell you the secrets of his soul,—tears, unspeakable prayers, and inward agonies would come to your knowledge, that might make you wonder at the difficulties of his religion, and burn with shame at the comparatively little cost of your own.

In no case is the Christian vocation one of ease. We are called to a higher life than that of selfish joy, to a nobler destiny than that of stagnant rest. The religion of sentimentalism, the religion that naturally runs into weak indulgence, or dissolves away into soft emotion, or sinks into moods of repose, is not the religion of Christ. The religion of expediency; the religion that takes no trouble, and that yields to the power of the times; the religion of the man that has for his motto, "I bend with the willow, and flow with the stream"; is a religion that will never save a soul. Bishop Reynolds was right in saying, "All Christ's disciples are military men." Every natural faculty must be trained for

war, every spiritual grace must take some part in the march, or in the patient watch, or in the strain of the stern, long fight, or in bearing up amidst the toils, perils, and disadvantages of a life spent from first to last in a battle-field—a life of endurance, a life of resistance, a life of hardy, robust, adventurous resolve. We have to fight with ourselves, "for the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other."* We have to fight with the power of the world,—the power that is ever at work to enchant us into forgetfulness of the Divine, the unseen, and the everlasting. We have to fight with foes whose existence is as personal as our own, but who are invisible,—foes who cast no shadow in the sunshine, leave no footprint in the winter snow, who can be touched by no foeman's lance, and bound by no captor's chain. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."†

Besides these private and self-defensive battles, we have to fight "the battles of the Lord," to match force with force, and skill with skill, in open conflict between truth and error in our own land; to go out on expeditions of service in foreign lands,

* Gal. v. 17. † Eph. vi. 12.

there to overthrow strongholds of ancient heathenism, and to take vast empires in the name of Christ; for Christ will finally conquer the world through the soldiers of His "sacramental host."

There is no discharge from this war. There is no pause in it. We may listen to no overtures of peace, sign no truce, seek no retreat. If a retreat could be found on earth, it would be the secret place of prayer, but even this holy of holies may be the centre of warfare, the very vortex of the storm. Experience has taught us that sometimes the whole of the season we can give to solitude is taken up with fighting, though, "blessed be God, the efficiency of prayer depends not on many words, and, therefore, if there be twenty minutes spent in the conflict, and but one in the prayer, and that brief prayer be real, it prevails." *

Go where you will, you must carry your weapons with you, and be ready to use them in any moment of surprise. As, when suspicious of being watched by the Indians, many an early colonist never went even to plough his field or fold his flock without a sword girt at his side or a gun slung at his shoulder; so, even when you go to your daily occupation, be sure that you go armed. Even when you go for your week of re-

* Samuel Martin.

creative rest, go prepared to meet the inevitable foe. Tired of the world, you have been saying, "Oh! that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest; lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness." At last, you are free. Away then, from streets and factories loud with life and black with the dust of toil; away, away to the wilderness of woods, and broken rocks, and breezy hills, and prospects of the sunlit sea; away to fields whose hedge-rows ring with music, to tranquil moorlands alive with flying gleams and shadows, to rippled sands where dry spots flash round your footsteps, next moment to glisten with the surf again; but while your spirit bounds with the joy of life, the rapture of peace, and the sense of liberty, remember that you are still a soldier, that you are still in the scene of warfare, that you still have at your side an enemy, as well as a Friend, who never slumbers nor sleeps; that even here, kindled by your own sinfulness, or injected by the tempter, sudden thoughts may come to you, which you must fling off and stamp out as a man would stamp out fire. Paradise though your solitude may be to your imagination, you must fight the good fight of faith in it; no marvel this, when you call to mind that man's first battle of conscience was fought in

Paradise, that there the soul suffered its first defeat, and the world its fall.

(2) The "Captain of the Lord's host" requires unquestioning *obedience to His authority*. High as we rate the quality of courage, and certain as we are that there can be no grand manhood without it, we see at once that not courage but obedience is the prime virtue of a soldier. Military courage is courage under orders. In the heat of battle the principle of subordination alone makes the difference between a true army and a lawless crowd hurrying forward to dash in blind rage against another crowd. Owing to this alone, when a word of command sounds from the central authority it flies from rank to rank, reaches with magical swiftness every man on the field, then makes many thousand men move with the precision of a machine, and the concentrated force of one individual will. On the part of the captain is required *command*, resulting from clear foresight, from secret information, and from keen calculation of contingencies; on the part of subordinates is simply required *obedience*. It is for him to command; for them to obey. When he says "Go," they go; when he says "Come," they come; when he says "Do this," they do it. Whether they are to wait in the camp, or to work in the trenches, or

to watch in the shade, or to ride on to the flaming range of the terrible bastion, are questions that rest with him, not with them.

> "Charge! was the captain's cry,
> Theirs not to make reply;
> Theirs not to reason why;
> Theirs but to do, or die."

Such is the obedience claimed from Christians by Christ. You are not your own captain; you are not to take orders from "antiquity," or from public opinion, or from a certain mysterious personification called the Church, but only from the Saviour. In all matters of Christian faith, or conscience, or practice, you are to know no words of command but His words. Soon as you recognise the Captain of the Lord's host, the only question you may ask before obedience is the question once asked by Joshua, "What saith my Lord to his servant?" and the only medium through which His answer is given with full and final authority is the Book of Inspiration. When any words are spoken to supplement or supersede the words of that Book, such words have the character, not of divine law, but simply of human opinion. If spoken even by the holiest father they express but the opinion of a fellow-subaltern; if spoken by the Church, but the opinion of the

army; if spoken by the world, but the opinion of the foe. After you have found in that Book the standards of faith, you must follow them alone. After you have found in it your ecclesiastical rules and positive institutes, it is not for you to say whether they are essential or not essential, needful to be kept or safe to be broken, for that decision has been already made by Christ, and from Him has gone forth the charge, "Warn them that are insubordinate";* "withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly."† After you have found in it the principles of the spiritual life, those principles are to be your laws, though they send you into the sharpest conflicts, and make you acquainted with "the press of the storm, the power of the night, the post of the foe." In any case for which the Scriptures seem to give us no direction, their very silence is directive, and commands you to stand still. In any case when you know not how to apply their rules to the circumstances of your particular exigency, wait on the Lord, as the old king of Judah did when he said, "O my God, we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee";‡ and fresh light will

* 1 Thess. v. 14. (ἀτάκτους). "ἄτακτος is especially said of the soldier who does not remain in rank; so *inordinatus* in Livy."—Alford.

† 2 Thess. iii. 6. ‡ 2 Chron. xx. 12.

break from the oracles, or fresh help come through a change in the course of events.

In all cases the Divine Book is the supreme and last expression of our Captain's will. You may learn what that will is through the teachings of wise men, but "to the law and the testimony, if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them"; you may learn it through the illumination of the Spirit, but that Spirit only enlightens by the Word; you may learn it from the intimations of God's providence, but nothing that He seems to say in His providence is to be our law when it contradicts a Scripture rule.

(3) The "Captain of the Lord's host" furnishes his soldiers with *power* for their warfare. "Who goeth a warfare at his own charges?" Not "the good soldier of Jesus Christ." To find resources for the army is no part of the responsibilities that belong to human leadership; but the analogy between Christ and other captains soon stops, for He is infinite, and whatever relation he sustains to His people He sustains to perfection. As a Divine Captain, He gives along with every command the strength to obey it. "Therefore," said John Newton, "if Christ were to command me to preach to the dead in their graves I would go to that dead con-

gregation and preach, in the full confidence that His power would attend my word."

There is the power of *His spirit.* Sure as I am a Christian, there is something more than human in me. Grace engages to make a man not only stronger than other men, but stronger than himself. By the transfusion of His own life Christ prepares each faithful soldier for the field. Other things may be strong, but His spirit is strength; and this strength is given out as we want it. No lever hangs with more exact an equipoise, no machine is fitted with more exact adjustment, no wave is flung upon the strand with a more exact momentum, no mathematical proportion is more accurate, than is the measure of each day's strength for each day's warfare. Never too much, never too little, it will always be precisely sufficient to meet the demand; for, from age to age and in many forms of language, God has renewed the ancient promise, "As thy days, so thy strength shall be."

There is the power of *His truth.* The spirit strengthens by the truth. The soul, like the body, has its life sustained by food. To "quit yourselves like men and be strong," you must have the right kind of food, and have it in sufficiency. Creatures fed on fugitive literature, brought up on magazine articles, and who are ever craving after stimulus

from popular oratory or social religious excitement; professors of religion, whose life is shallow because they love to live in public, and whose theology is meagre because it has cost them nothing; defenders of the faith, whose knowledge of the Bible is second-hand, and therefore second-rate,—these are not the men to do Christ's work or fight Christ's battles in the world. The stout heart and the strong hand; the manly bone and muscle that can strike blows and take blows; the equilibrium of spiritual health; the grace of Christian chivalry that can bear and forbear; the steadfast courage that obeys Him who says, "Stand in the evil day, and having done all, stand"; the qualities we look for, and can only hope to find in the soldier whose food is the truth that he carries in his pocket-Bible; truth made his own; truth thought over and systematized; truth turned into meditation and prayer; truth incorporated into his very self, and kindled into the fire of life.

There is the power of the *love* that He inspires. Love has "a most vehement flame." "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." You have known men fired with such an enthusiasm of affection for their commanders that they have been ready to follow them to the ends of the earth, to live for them, and if need be to die

for them. When talking to an old sailor you have heard his tones grow tender, and seen his weather-beaten visage light up at the very name of Nelson. You may have seen a French veteran seem to grow young again as you spoke to him of the dead Napoleon. Trajan won the heart of his army because he tore up his robe to bind up the wounds of a soldier, who had been stricken down on the field. But all human comparisons are poor, and look almost profane, when we think of Christ, and of the responsive love that His love to us inspires. "For he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, and by his stripes we are healed."

"Thou, O my Jesus, Thou did'st me
Upon the cross embrace;
For me did'st bear the nails and spear,
And manifold disgrace;
And griefs and torments numberless,
And sweat of agony,—
Even death itself,—and all for me,
Who was Thine enemy!
Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ,
Shall I not love Thee well?
Not for the sake of winning heaven,
Or of escaping hell;
Not with the hope of gaining aught,
Not seeking a reward;
But as Thyself has loved me,
O ever-loving Lord!" *

* Francis Xavier.

(4) As "Captain of the Lord's host," *He leads us to an enterprise that must end in glory.*

In *glory to His own name.* Ours is not the losing side; we are not committed to a sinking cause. It may suffer many alternations of loss and gain, but must in the end be victorious over every adverse force. This assurance is kindled when we remember that it is the cause of truth and righteousness; it is strengthened when we remember that it is fought for by all the powers of Providence. Our Captain has "all power given to him in heaven and in earth." "When the Israelites," says Bishop Hall, "saw those walled cities and towers, whose height was reported to reach to heaven, the fame whereof had so affrighted them ere they saw them; they were ready doubtless to say in their distrust. Which way shall we scale these invincible fortifications? What ladders, what engines shall we use to so great a work? God prevents their infidelity: 'Behold, I have given Jericho into thine hand.' If their walls had their foundations in the centre of the earth; if the battlements had been so high built that an eagle could not soar above them, this is enough, 'I have given it thee.' For on whose earth have they raised those castles? Out of whose treasure did they dig those piles of stone? Whence had they their strength and time to build?

Cannot He that gave recall His own? O ye fools of Jericho! what if your walls be strong, your men valiant, your leaders skilful, your king wise, when God hath said, 'I have given thee the city.' What can swords or spears do against the Lord of hosts? *Without* Him means can do nothing; how much less *against* Him!"

So we would reason still, and such are our encouragements now. "As I live, saith the Lord, the whole earth shall be filled with my glory!" This word, repeated since in many ways, is hastening to its final accomplishment. Through the truth wielded by Christians, the power of Christ has already arrested the subtle and evasive faiths of ancient superstition, and rocked to their ramified foundations the most gigantic systems of idolatry earth has ever seen. The prince of this world must be cast out. Every "Jericho" must fall, and the men of every land, though armed against the host of God, as the Canaanites were of old, must in free enthusiasm or forced surrender bow to His dominion.

In *glory to each individual who is on Christ's side.* In other cases the battle rarely ends in advantage to the private soldier. Many fight where but one receives the prize. It has been said that many a man who was lured into enlistment by the senti-

ment, "Go where glory waits thee," is now working in a brickfield, or breaking stones upon the road. In the case of many a man the path of glory has ended in an unknown grave. History has not glorified the memory, or even mentioned the name of one private soldier out of the sixty thousand who fell at Waterloo. After the recent American battle of Antietan, artists went up in a balloon to survey the field. From the perilous heights of the atmosphere they took stereographs of what they saw below. The stained and sordid scene, the wrecks and rags, the nameless shapes of the slain thrown in careless heaps or ranged in ghastly rows for burial, are delineated in these sun-pictures with such terrible truth that, after only a moment's glance over them you would turn faint, and lock up the sickening mementos in secret drawers, as you would bury the dead out of sight.* In this way is fulfilled to the private soldier the world's promise of glory. But Christ calls every man in His army by name. He says to every man, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Not one will sink into obscurity or pass into forgetfulness, not one will fall, not one will die. Each hidden combatant is assured by a word that never can be broken of a glory

* Oliver Wendell Holmes: "Soundings from the Atlantic."

that never can fade. His heart must never melt in fear, his hand never drop in nerveless laxity. Through life there must be no retreat from the foe; and except from the shield of faith, there must be no cover from the fight; but as in old feudal days each knight bore upon his shield his own heraldic cypher, so, to borrow a thought from Joseph Irons, each Christian, to indicate his rank and symbolize his expectation, has emblazoned upon his shield a strange device, and that device is—a cross and a crown!

THE SHEPHERD OF SOULS.

V.

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."—PSALM xxiii. 1.

The Shepherd of Souls.

THE man who uttered these words has now spent thirty centuries in heaven. Thirty centuries have taken their flight since the lips of the "sweet singer of Israel" trembled, and mouldered, and mingled with the dust of death. Ages upon ages have elapsed since even the last relic or trace of his material life vanished from this earth, and since it was possible to touch the harp from whose strings his fingers swept celestial melody; to grasp the tattered banner which he was wont "to lift up in the name of the Lord"; to see the book of the law which "he made his meditation day and night"; to mark the rift in the palace wall where once hung and quivered Saul's javelin, aimed at David's heart; or to stand in a time-worn chamber at Jerusalem, and say, Here his beautiful and holy spirit passed away from earth to join the "harpers

harping with their harps" amidst the mighty thunderings of music within the veil!

Yet, child of God, although this hymn is old, and was old even when Homer wrote his poetry, or Solon gave his laws, like the creation around you, it is always new. You will not say of a single sentence it contains, "It is out of date, it is unsuited to the life of an Englishman in the nineteenth century; and besides this, all its meaning is now known to the uttermost, all its vital spirit spent, and it has no longer power to move me." Had it been inspired this very morning it could not have had the charm of more dewy freshness; it could not have been more quickening, nor could it have been more exquisitely fitted to express your own best and deepest life. The solid facts of true theology, and the effect they have upon the heart, can never become antiquated; and because it sets forth some of the most gladdening of these with brevity, yet in perfection, it has an immortal novelty—it is a poem "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away"; we may apply to it, and for the same reasons, the epithet applied to the praise of the glorified, and call it through all ages "a new song." O sing unto the Lord this new song!

The fundamental idea of the psalm is contained,

and its key-note struck on this sentence, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

I. It states A FACT IN DAVID'S SPIRITUAL LIFE, "The Lord is my shepherd." In studying this statement we must first *endeavour to identify the Personage it sets forth.* Two titles are included in his appellative, Lord and Shepherd. Who is He? We ought to know Him; and if we live and die not knowing Him, we must live and die among the lost. Let us enter "the House of the Interpreter," and ask Jesus Christ. If we do, we shall hear Him say, "*I* am the good Shepherd, and I know my sheep, and am known of mine." The term "Lord" points to Divine perfection; for it would be high treason to call any created intelligence Lord of the Spirit. The term "Shepherd" points to mediatorial relationship, for it describes the office of a Saviour. Only when we know "God in Christ" do we know Him as at once Lord and Shepherd.

The Lord—the holy, holy, holy Lord, before the burning beams of whose omnipotent holiness no sinful thing can stand, and at the dazzle of whose enthroned perfections the very seraphim of glory do bow and veil their faces—could not, without a mediator, admit to the participation of the joys that flow from His presence a race like ours,

creatures who by disobedience have forfeited all claim to their possession, and by pollution all capacity for their enjoyment; therefore, in the fulness of time, He whom we call Jesus Christ came forth from the Divine essence, came forth Divine, yet visible in human form, to minister as the one mediating agent between holy divinity and fallen humanity; the Root, yet the offspring of David; the Lord, yet the Shepherd of the soul. These truths, which we know in the form of history, the psalmist only knew in the form of prophecy. The Gospels and Epistles were not in David's Bible, and we must not ascribe to him that precise knowledge of the Mediator which was impossible in his day; but he was mysteriously moved to utter words that ring with rich evangelical music, words adapted to express the joy of his own confidence in Jehovah, yet also fraught with meanings, some of which perhaps he only dimly saw, and which could only be fully known in after ages,—words intended to fit the thoughts of Christians when speaking of Christ, for we, explaining these words of the Old Testament by the discoveries of the New, know that the Lord our Shepherd is not the Father, "dwelling in the light unapproachable," but the Son, "God manifest in the flesh."

Let us *next seek to understand the mediatorial*

office which this statement sets in view. What is meant when the Lord is represented as a shepherd? Forget yourself and your surroundings; live with David and look into his spirit; try, by sympathy, to find the most natural and likely processes of the train of thought which led him thus to speak of God, and you may thus be best assisted to find the true import of his expression. He had himself been a shepherd, and though now he was a king he still loved the simplicities of a shepherd's life. For the moment he often fancied himself a child again, singing among the hills of Bethlehem; he lived once more in the old times of his life, and looked wistfully back on the old scenes—scenes so soft with peace, so bright with spiritual sunshine, and so clear from weary care, that they seemed like a dream of heaven. Recollections of those bygone days would refresh his fainting nature more than the breath of morning or the sound of falling streams. Tender visions of the past would mingle with his thoughts in the tented field, on the harassed march, or amidst the troubles of his stormy throne. He looked back upon his adventures when a shepherd boy. He thought, for instance, how he saved the life of his sheep. "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear and took a lamb out

of the flock; and I went after him and delivered it out of his mouth, and when he arose against me, I caught him by the beard, and slew him; thy servant slew both the lion and the bear." He thought over the days when he "led the sheep out," calling them by name, feeding them when hungry, healing them when sick, guiding them over the hill paths and through the gloomy hollows until they were safe in the village fold. One day, when rapt in thoughts like these, suddenly, at a flash, they were lit up with a new meaning, there came a rush of inspiration over his soul along with this stream of familiar memories, and he cried in ecstasy, "*The Lord is my Shepherd!*" All that I was to the flock He is to me!

Sanctify this image yet further. Pour your thoughts of Jesus into the mould of David's poetry, and they will seem yet more clear and glorious. *Jesus has saved the life of His sheep.* "All we like sheep have gone astray; . . . and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." It is *iniquity* for conscious, reflective, intelligent natures to go astray from the great Spirit; and we *have* thus gone astray. Iniquity is distinct from infirmity. Iniquity is in-equity. Iniquity is open to penalty, and the penalty for departure from God is death. Nothing can be more evident than this. Nature

gives the decision even before revelation speaks. If you go astray from Him who is "the Life," you must die; if you go astray by your own choice, you deserve to die. Death is, therefore, at once the natural effect and the penal end of all spiritual wanderings. But Jesus, from His throne, saw the wanderers, and "was filled with compassion on the multitudes, for they were as sheep without a shepherd." He saw death impending, and He came down to save them. He bowed His head to the stroke of law. That stroke was no fiction, no ceremony, no merely figurative expedient. "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts. Smite the Shepherd!" These words breathe earnest truth, and point to a tremendous reality. God be merciful to us, if we are not alive to that reality, if we ever sink into the mere mechanical speakers of customary phrases when we speak of the doctrines revealed in that awful hour in which "the good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep!" By His representative obedience; by His death and by His life; by His sacrifice consummated on earth, and by His eternal ministry in heaven; by His work as the Saviour from death, and His work as the Preserver of the life which He saves, feeding it and guiding it until brought from the perils

of the wilderness and folded amidst the felicities of Paradise, Jesus has achieved the right to the title of "Shepherd."

Let us now mark the language of appropriation conveyed in this statement. "The Lord is *my* shepherd." Distinguish between the knowledge and the appropriation of a fact. "A child is dying," said a stranger, passing by the house of Jairus. "*My* child is dying," said another voice; "Lord, *my* little daughter lieth at the point of death!" Oh, the difference between the feeling of the speakers! "I know every inch of this noble estate," says some homeless wanderer over the fields in search of shelter from the pitiless tempest. It would be a different thing to say, "This estate is *mine*." In religion, the difference between mere power to use the language of theory, and the power to use language of immediate proprietary application, is an infinite difference; it makes all the difference between the saved and the lost. "God is love"—"God is love to *me;*" "God is light"—"The Lord is *my* light and *my* salvation;" "God is a shepherd"—"The Lord is *my* shepherd;" a demon might say the first, the second could only be said by a child of light. As the knowledge of law is not obedience, the knowledge of religion is not religion. You may know the gospel, and yet

refuse it. You may know all its truths in all their due proportions and manifold connections; you may see beneath its separate statement a high and perfect scientific unity; you may speak of its promises in words that tremble with tenderness, or flame with grandeur, or flow with pictured eloquence, and yet perish for want of the warrant to claim them as your own. Even if, like Thomas, you saw the Saviour in the clear daylight of reality, and had every doubt removed by evidence offered to your very touch; could "put your fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust your hands into the side," still you must perish unless you could cry out "*My* Lord, and *my* God!" "O ye daughters of Jerusalem, this is *my* beloved, and this is *my* friend!"

Jesus, with all His Divine fulness of mercy, is only waiting for appropriation. All He asks of His creatures is that they shall receive Him, and "to as many as receive him he gives power to be the sons of God, even to as many as believe on his name." Are you a stranger wandering from the fold of God, yet just beginning to feel unspeakable sorrow and astonishment at the thought of your sin, along with a sense of helpless desolation, which makes you cry, "Alone! alone!" You are not to feel as if alone amongst the mountains.

Look up, and you will see the Son of man bending over you. "He came to seek and to save that which was lost," and at last He has found you. Trust Him, throw yourself on His mighty love, and though you are helpless as a lamb on the shepherd's shoulder, He will surely save you. Fear not, and you will soon be able to sing, "The Lord is my shepherd."

II. This sentence not only records a fact, but THE INFERENCE DRAWN FROM IT, "The Lord is my shepherd"; what then? "I shall not want." With regard to this inference, you are requested to study, first, *its argumentative value.* Not as a believer only, but as a reasoner does the psalmist speak, and his language is that of fair logical induction.

Our wants may be numerous as are the faculties of our intricate nature. The eye, the ear, and all the parts of our organic life may suffer from want, but the wants of the soul must be the greatest wants of all. The powers of temptation, taking advantage of our weakness and unbelief, frequently threaten us with want. "A storm of trouble is coming, and you will want shelter; a trial of principle is coming, and you will want courage; a change in your circumstances is coming; you will be taken from the circle of your present mercies,

and want bread for your family, or from the scene of those spiritual administrations which you feel to be essential, and you will want bread for the soul." There are two ways of reaching that spirit of confidence, which will make you reply to all such suggestions, "I shall not want." One way is by faith in a promise. "God hath given to us exceeding great and precious promises." "Every promise being ratified by God's oath, than which nothing is more immutable; sealed by the blood of Christ, than which nothing is more precious; testified by the Spirit, than which nothing is more true; delivered by the hand of mercy, than which nothing is more free; and received by the hand of faith, than which nothing is more sure."* You search the treasury of the promises, you light on one fitted to the exigencies of the moment, and taking care to know that yours is the believing heart for which it was intended, you find it instinct with a strange virtue, it fills you with a secret stream of strength, an intense repose of peace, and you say, "Back, black thoughts, trouble me no more," "I shall not want"; every sorrow will bring its companion mercy, and there will be supplies for "every time of need," for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

There is another way of arriving at this result

* Augustine.

and that is the way found by David. "The Lord is my shepherd." Is this true? Then, although my case may be so original and solitary that I can find no promise clearly meeting it, I can, without a promise, trust a silent God. Before He has uttered a word I will trust Him. Though He has not left a line upon the leaves of revelation with distinct reference to a trial like mine, I know the fact that He is my shepherd, and draw the inference that I shall not want. Instances of such reasoning abound in the inspired histories of the Spirit. "The Lord is my portion," said one; there is the fact. "Therefore will I hope in Him"; there is the inference. "The Lord is my light and my salvation"; there is the fact. "Therefore will I not fear"; there is the inference. "This God is our God, for ever and ever"; there is the fact. "He will be our guide even unto death"; there is the inference. By such steps of reasoning do we think our way out from the fact that the "Lord is our shepherd," to the inference which the text proclaims.

To one of the "little flock" of Galileans, only half enlightened as to the true lordship of his Shepherd, and who only clearly knew Him as "the Son of man, not having a place where to lay His head," this inference might not have been so obvious; but

to us who know that, as the result of His sufferings, He has received "all power in heaven and earth," and has been "declared both Lord and Christ," the inference ought to be irresistible. We are not to understand that this new dominion is anything less than Divine. From its very nature only a Divine power could govern it. When we assert its existence, we simply mean that in virtue of the new arrangement of grace that He has effected, law now empowers Him to exercise all His own Divine rule for mediatorial ends. Think, then, fainting Christian, of the empire over which your Shepherd reigns. Think of the million, million wonders that invisibly surround you; think of the worlds that glow beneath the microscope,—He is Lord of these; think of the worlds which the night reveals, their spacious sweep, their mystic flight, all their grand phenomena, all their "numbers beyond number, numberless," and all their possibilities of life and history,—He is Lord of these; think of the innumerable companies of spirits embodied and disembodied,—He is Lord of these; think of the gifts, and means, and ministries of grace,—He is Lord of these. Rise yet higher, and think of the infinity hinted in the Hebrew word for "Lord," which the psalmist here employs,—the word written with four letters,

yet comprehending in its meaning the past, the present, and the future of the verb to be, and telling of One "who was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty"; think of His holiness, His faithfulness, and His love, all passing knowledge; you will then have some conception of what is meant by His great name, "The Lord." Since He is yours, all things are yours, for if you have the Sun you have the rays; if you have the Fountain you have all the living stream. He stands in the relation of Shepherd to your spirit; and you do not really believe that the Lord is your shepherd if you believe that you can want.

Now ponder *the special applications of this argument to the facts of actual life.* The psalm is full of notes to help your memory and guide your line of thought. If you can use David's words of trust for the future, in all their first meaning, you mean to say,—

"I shall not want for *appropriate food.*" This is the main idea of the first verse. Hard times, perhaps, are trying you, and they suggest many misgivings as to the supplies for the future of your physical life; but, known only to the Shepherd, there is certain fixed and definite time for the course of that life on earth. "You are immortal" on earth till that time is ended; the moment that

ends it is infallibly sure to be the best for you, and the best for every holy interest, and until that moment strikes you will not want food even for the body; the means of ornamental existence may fail, but the means of essential support, never; bread will fall from the clouds and water gush from the sand, rather than one word should break which assures you that for every emergency "the Lord will provide." But the highest truth in the sentence you now appropriate,—the truth on which all its other truths depend, is truth in relation to the soul. The soul shall never starve. The new life of the soul,—the life that loves, the life that trusts, the life that is holy, has its own peculiar hunger and thirst, and its necessities will all be met. It is said in old story that the Duke of Alva, having given some prisoners their lives, they afterwards petitioned him for bread, and his answer was, "I promised to spare your life, but not to grant you food." Not so does the Saviour answer the cry of the life which He has spared. He did not sacrifice Himself to save it from the sentence of justice that He might afterwards abandon it to the death of starvation. No! He preserves that which He bestows. Hour by hour, and moment by moment, He continues the supplies of assimilating grace, the nutriment, the secret food of the

soul, and thus fulfils His promise, "My sheep shall never perish."

"I shall not want for *needful rest.*" "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the waters of rest." The flock is travelling to a distant fold, but even on its way is to enjoy needful intervals of rest,—rest, not as the end of its present existence, but rest enough to refresh its power of onward motion. You may feel half inclined to doubt this statement. You are ready to think it disproved by your own experience. The busy thought, the burning brow, the toiling hand, the weary foot, the overstimulated faculties, never seem able to find rest. There is no rest in the day, for life is full of cares and crosses; there is no rest at night, for the eyes seem to see more sights when shut than when open. Ten thousand thoughts, ten thousand vexing fancies, wake up to sting the nerves, and to drive across the brain in a rush of wild phantasmagoria. So you think, and so you are tempted to complain. There may be such passages even in a Christian's history, but they are the exception, not the rule; and even if you sometimes suffer thus, such suffering should cast no discredit on the promise. You might find, on searching, that the suffering comes from some chosen course of your own,—not from

the natural, unobstructed cause of God's own appointment; or you might find that if such wearisome days are indeed appointed by Him, they are appointed in the discipline of love. In all cases the principle holds good, that although you have, at certain times, *needful* disturbance, you have upon the whole *needful* rest, the rest that is requisite for the highest purposes of life. The sheep are not always travelling up the mountain pass, or over the fire of the bright and burning sand. They are made to lie down in green pastures, and are led beside the still waters, that by this temporary rest they may be fitted to travel again. The ancient hosts of God were not always at the bitter springs of Marah, not always in conflict with Amalek at Rephidim; they were at intervals permitted to rest in some green camping ground, where they could see trees softly wave, and waters brightly sparkle, that they might be thus fitted to renew their march and fight their foes once more. You are not always weary,—not always in "a great fight of afflictions." Though passing trials may, for the moment, blot out the sunny memories of past repose, you still have them to record. Believing in Jesus, you have had, and may have, all needful rest. Rest imparted by His presence; the rest whose suffusion you feel when the words

of some sweet promise are shot like "silver shafts of song" into your soul; rest from the reflected peace of that rest to which you and all the people of God are hasting; rest through books, through bright faces, bright voices, and through the pure, refreshing love you find at home,—all these means of rest are given in sufficient measure to nerve and brace the spirit for its path, and to keep you from sinking down exhausted before you reach the end. Amidst innumerable mercies, soft and grateful to your nature,—as are "green pastures" and "still waters" to the nature of the sheep,—"He whom your soul loveth maketh His flock to rest at noon."

"I shall not want for *restorative mercy*." "He restoreth my soul." There is a straggler at a little distance from the flock. It looks faint and lifeless, it refuses food, and, contrary to its natural instinct, it turns from its companions and tries to get alone. The shepherd keenly glances after it, sees that something is wrong there, and is soon on the spot with all healing appliances to "bind up that which is broken and strengthen that which is sick." The memory of such a simple incident, one so common in David's life, slept in his mind for years, until, touched by inspiration, it sprang up, kindled into metaphor, and became this declaration of God's healing love. Our state when the

Good Shepherd came to us was one not of jeopardy only, but of sickness, and He came to make us not only safe but sound. Directly we were pardoned the healing work began, but it will not be ended until we have reached the "land of everlasting health."* The health of the soul is often weak and precarious now, and though strong for a time it often suffers a relapse. The Shepherd is ever watching all its symptoms with those eyes "which are as a flame of fire," and which strike into burning distinctness the secrets on which they look. That soul which He watches will not be suffered to pine and die for want of restorative care. This is no encouragement to think lightly of sin, and if you think thus lightly, never did consolation come to you so strangely shaded with alarming thoughts. Brother, has your soul ceased to prosper? Are you drooping in the ways of the Lord? Are you sooner tired than you used to be? Have you lost your love to Him and His people; your first spiritual sensitiveness, your first keen hunger and thirst after righteousness, and are you thus remaining with only a feeling of indolent regret? Then, sure as God loves you, He will afflict you; this is the common method of His Spirit's restorative ministry: He strikes to heal, He wounds to bless;

* Erasmus.

by some sharp experiment of discipline, by some bitter medicinal mercy, by some trouble that will wrestle with your soul and rouse it into action, will He seek to do it good and make it strong; but if you have still a tender conscience, if you mourn for sin, if at the same time you are broken down by some great mystery of trial, you will find this text alive with an animating charm. That pressure is only the hand of the Physician upon you; that bitter cup is filled with healing love; and in all those sorrows that crowd around you you only see the Shepherd in the very act of restoring your soul. Soon you will be able to sing, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."

"I shall not want *for guidance in the right paths.*" The flock is on its way home. "He leadeth me," says one of the travellers, "in paths of righteousness, for his name's sake." We have just spoken of a right state; we are now speaking of a right course. Provision is secured for both. Stripped of all figure, "paths of righteousness," or "right paths," mean right ways of thinking, of believing, of speaking, and of acting. Left to

ourselves we should never have found these paths; left to ourselves, even though we may be in them now, we shall lose them again. Amongst all the varied tribes of nature there could not be selected a more perfect type of a life liable to wander than that which the psalmist has taken. The passage bird is never lost. High over the waves of the Atlantic it strikes a right path to its home a thousand leagues away. With unerring certainty the creature of the forest finds a right path to its cave; but the sheep has no such sure accuracy of self-direction, it is in its nature a helpless and dependent thing, and but for its shepherd would lose its path to the final shelter. Just as helpless and dependent is your soul. If you travel in the right path, it is not because you have an unerring instinct, or an unerring reason, or an unerring sense of right, but because you have an unerring Leader. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me . . . . and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of a stranger." Dull, apathetic, amazed, bewildered by false lights and voices, Christ lost sight of, the word of Christ not read, the Spirit of Christ speaking to the conscience, not listened for, to guide them through some particular mystery of faith or practice, they may

with reference to that particular mystery in that unwatchful moment miss the road; but while the main principle of the life is trust in Jesus they will not be left to err essentially, to err impenitently, to err for ever. Consult no human oracle, ask the advice of no casuist as your first authority in any strait, but look to Jesus, and while you have His word as your directory, and keep the mind in sensitive communication with His Spirit, He will "lead you in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

"I shall not want for *consolation in the valley of the shadow of death.*" On the way home to Bethlehem there was a sunless gorge, beasts of prey were heard in the woods that skirted it, robbers might be hiding among the rocks, and it was always a relief to the shepherd to feel that he and his charge were out safe beyond that haunted pass; but when he thought of his own Shepherd, even this recollection became a joyful parable, and was used to express his holy confidence: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil: for thou art with me thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Such a dark part there is in the path of every spiritual traveller,—a part worthy to be called by that dread name, "The valley of the shadow of death."

"Over that valley hang the discouraging clouds of confusion; Death, also, doth always spread his wings over it; in a word, it is every whit dreadful, being utterly without order." * The shadow shows that the reality is near that casts it, and that reality is death. It may be that all around is bright, and the soul alone is sorrowful. Weak in faith, and in heaviness with manifold temptations, even eternal death seems near, and you are already in its shadow. It may be that death has come into your family, bereavement has made you desolate, and you live in a shadow. Its terror stills all music, takes the light out of all beauty, a great wave of darkness rushes over all your life. It is dark in the starlight, dark in the moonbeams, dark in the day. You care for nothing, you can do nothing, you see nothing but one great sorrow. Returning unread the examination papers of a student, the bereaved Professor Wilson said, "I could not see to read them in the valley of the shadow of death"; and you can understand that sense of black distress. At last the shadow of your own approaching death will fall upon you, and you may even now be solemnly passing into it. But however deep and awful the various shadows thrown over your path may be, you never need

* John Bunyan.

feel absolutely desolate; for Christ has said, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you." He is not the less with us because the night hides His face. You may walk by faith when unable to walk by sight; and His grace through faith can make you stronger and more courageous than other men; stronger and more courageous than yourself. All must be well while you believe in Jesus; for He never can revoke His promise or resign His charge. He is ever saying, "Fear not, I am with you"; how can you, therefore, *dare* to fear? It is "the Lord" who has pledged Himself to be your "Shepherd," and therefore, knowing who your Saviour is, the very fact of your necessity should be to you a proof of His presence: for how could such a Saviour withdraw His presence or withhold His hand at the time when you most need Him at your side? At least such a conviction might comfort you, if at the present you are unable to rise to an ecstasy of gladness. "Comfort," the psalmist anticipated; comfort you may feel even in the valley of the shadow of death.

Under the open sky, in one of the valleys of Wales, a preacher was addressing a vast congregation. His subject was the tempter and his devices. In a style vividly dramatic he pictured the spirit of evil traversing the earth to tempt the members of

Christ's flock. To place after place he went, seeking rest and finding none. Christian after Christian overcame his tempting suggestions by the power of faith and the agency of Scripture. At night-fall he entered the chamber of a dying saint. The shadow of death was on his face, the awful moment of the soul's transit had nearly come. Attendants were waiting in the intensity of silence, for they almost thought that all was over. "I will dart a doubt of Jesus in that saint's mind," said the Evil One, "and fill his last moment with fear;" but just then the lips parted, and the words came forth: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in *the presence of mine enemies:* thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." In a moment the spirit was glorified, and Satan was foiled! May such a victory be yours; it may be, it must be, if you can say with truth, "The Lord is my shepherd."

THE TEACHER OF THE WEARY.

VI.

"Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea; I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh (is dried up*), because there is no water, and dieth for thirst.

"I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.

"The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary; he wakeneth morning by morning; he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned."—ISAIAH l. 2—4.

* תִּבְאַשׁ "*is dried up.*"—Bod. MS. ξηρανθήσονται "*Shall be dried up.*"—Septuagint.

The Teacher of the Weary.

FOR the young, this is fresh, beautiful, sunlit life; to the old, it is often what Talleyrand found it, who in the journal of his eighty-third birthday wrote, "Life is a long fatigue." Weary eyes droop, weary shoulders bend, weary hands tremble, weary feet drag heavily along, weary brows burn, weary hearts faint everywhere. If at this moment, in this city, thousands were to express their most familiar experience in one articulation, they would say, "Weary, weary." The primary cause of the universal weariness is universal sin. The needle forced from its centre is in a state of tremulous motion; man wandered from his God is in a state of weariness. Though now on the way back, he will never be perfectly at rest until finally at home.

The first cry of a soul when Divinely wakened

to its true condition is after a Teacher, who in a way suited to its weakness will teach it secrets suited to its wants. Such a Teacher has been found for us all, and the "words in season that He speaks are the 'words of eternal life.'"

Listen to this Teacher, for He is speaking to us now. His aim is at once to reveal Himself, and to indicate the kind of instruction that He engages to convey. He speaks in the style of God. Beginning with the formula so magnificently stern, "Thus saith the Lord," He at once announces His Divinity. After claiming as His own the glory of certain Divine actions, without any change of person, or break in the thread of His language, He goes on to speak of Himself as a man. He tells us that He knows what it is to be the recipient of impressions, to be a learner, and even a sufferer! "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting." If we had no previous acquaintance with the history of redeeming love, this language would utterly confound us; but though still mysterious, it looks no longer self-contradictory when regarded as spoken by Him who is at once both Son of God and Son of man. We shall never be able to adjust and explain the revealed personalities of the Godhead; but we

know as a matter of pure revelation that Christ is called the Son of God because He has the nature of God; that He is called the Son of man because He has the nature of man; that as Son of God it is said of Him, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"; that as Son of man, it is said of Him with equal truth, "Then did they spit upon his face, and buffetted him, and others smote him with the palms of their hands."

These words, therefore, could have been spoken only by the Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. They place before our thoughts, I. His Divine power and glory; II. His human life and education; III. The mediatorial teaching for which He was thus prepared.

I. HIS DIVINE POWER AND GLORY. Power is naturally calm. The power that sustains the universe is in fact most wonderful when, unseen, unfelt, with Divine silence and infinite ease, it moves on in its ordinary course; but we are often most impressed by it when it strikes against obstructions, and startles the senses by its violence. When the sunshine, without a sound, softly wakens the plant into life, lifts it from the soil, wins forth its leaves, persuades its flowers to open, makes its colours blush and its odours fly, a greater miracle.

of power is wrought than when the storm suddenly tears that plant out of its place, and flings it forth to perish. Yet perhaps a storm will make a child think of power more than the sunshine will. Knowing our frame and dealing with us as with children, our Teacher seeks to impress us with a sense of His divine power by bidding us think of Him as working by inexorable force certain awful changes and displacements in nature. "I dry up the sea; I made the rivers a wilderness: their fish is dried up because there is no water, and dieth for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." We have no reason to suppose that there is here a restrictive reference to any one particular chain of events in history. We are at liberty to apply the text to any instance in which such modes of power were put forth as are here alluded to, and the more complete that instance the more fully will the design of the text be answered. Take the following illustrations:—

One day, with a casual blow of his hammer, Hugh Miller laid open a block in a quarry, and there discovered a fossil fish, supposed to be the first of its own variety ever seen by mortal.* There it lay, "*dried up*," turned into a thing of

* "Old Red Sandstone," p. 277.

stone, fixed in the attitude of surprise and defence in which it met with sudden death, the attitude in which are found nine-tenths of the similar specimens since brought to light. Whose work was this? You step into a geological museum, and see there fish-forms of an antique type, that were out of fashion on the planet long before Adam lived. Ages and ages have passed away since such dull oxydized fossils were like myriads of gold and silver arrows leaping and flashing in the blue sea, as it roared over great part of what is now England and Scotland. Whose work was this? What Hand tilted up the ocean-bed, drained off miles of mighty waters, and left all the organisms of the deep stranded in the sediment, to be dried up and mineralized into the relics we look upon to-day? These stupendous changes were wrought not by a blind law, but by a living will, the will of Him who is my own awful King, yet most familiar Friend. To me, geology itself is evangelical. I find *Christ's* name traced in sacred cypher on the foundations of the lasting hills. *He* dried up the sea; *He* made the river a wilderness; and when I go down amongst the memorials of some ancient sea, or some primæval wilderness once rich with gorgeous vitality of cane-brake and fern leaves, whose shapes are left printed and sculptured in

airy tracery and exquisite foliation over layers of coal or ledges of stone, I feel my faith in *Christ* confirmed. It is a joy to think that the power of Him who trod the trembling platform of creation before the annals of the human race began, and who still performs other wonders spoken of in this proclamation, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering,"—the power of Him from whose hand flits forth the blinding hurricane when it sweeps the waves flat, wrecks the armada, and fills the scene with stormy gloom; the power that spread the curtain of the night over old Egypt, when, for seventy hours, the people sat in panic stillness; the power that opened the sixth seal, "and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth"; the power so mighty to destroy is now all mediatorial, and is this day amongst us, "travelling in the greatness" of its strength, "mighty to save."

II. HIS HUMAN LIFE AND EDUCATION. When the Lord, in pity to the weary sons of men, came out from the secret throne of His pure and inconceivable divinity to be their Teacher, not only did He become a man, but He touched our nature at

its lowest point, assumed it in its humblest form, and began His human life, as we did ours, in the helplessness of infancy. An apostle says, "He emptied himself." By an act of His own royal power He placed that power in abeyance. By His own free will He laid by for a time His own inalienable glory, and entered into shades such as veiled our own first months on earth, the blank months of which we can remember nothing. He accepted all the conditions of weakness, growth, and education that belongs to a life like ours; became an infant like other infants, and gradually a youth like other youths, then a man like other men.

Though these words may seem harsh, and almost tinctured with irreverence, they convey the truth, else there can be no truth or consolation in the doctrine of our Lord's humanity. The few words that break the grand and reverent silence of Scripture as to Christ's early years express the same idea. "The child," says Luke, "grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him." "He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." In a similar strain He here prophetically says of Himself, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned. . . He wakeneth me morning by

morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." Gradually, it seems, the Divine Spirit, like a mysterious Voice, woke up within Him the consciousness of what He was, and of what He had come on earth to fulfil. As His human capacity grew, that Spirit filled it to its utmost measure. Morning by morning, through all the days of His childhood, the Voice was ever wakening Him to higher consciousness and more awful knowledge. As time after time He heard the village rabbi read from prophecy of one who should "bear the griefs and carry the sorrows" of men, in clearer and more pathetic tones the awakening Voice said, "Thou art He." When He visited the Temple and moved amidst its mystic imageries, He was wakened to see, first dimly, then more and more brightly, types of Himself in them all,—in the slain offering, His own appointed sacrifice; in the water of the laver, His own cleansing blood; in the cloud of incense, His own high priestly prayers; and even when at last, after the patient waiting and silent preparation of thirty years, He entered upon His public work, He was still a learner, He was always practising lessons in duty, always going through discipline; all through His earthly life He was preparing for His heavenly ministry, as Teacher of the weary and Saviour of the lost, nor was His equip-

ment complete until He had uttered His last cry from the cross.*

III. THE MEDIATORIAL TEACHING for which He had been thus prepared.

1. It is *personal.* If His own personal teaching had not been in view, there would have been no need for all this personal preparation. "The Lord hath given *me* the tongue of the learned, that *I* should know how to speak." This is His own testimony to the great fact that He Himself personally teaches every soul that is saved. So high is the origin of such a soul, so deep has been its fall; so hard are the lessons it must master, and so great are the perils it must shun: so sublime are the stations it has to fill, and the functions it has to discharge, in this and in other worlds yet to open upon it, that its education is not to be entrusted to any created being. The great Lord Himself has entered into a capacity to become its Teacher, and that "which dwelleth in the light, no man can approach unto; which no man hath seen or can see," has been made by Christ

* "In substance, Jesus was the Eternal Son of God; but through the simple act of His incarnation He had, by voluntary self-limitation, made the human form of existence, both in time and space, entirely His own, and, therefore, reduced His conscious life within the limits of a human sphere. In the development of His consciousness, He had just reached that point in which He already apprehended the vocation given Him by the Father." This passage, having reference to the baptism of our Lord, occurs in Ebrard's "Gospel History," p. 190. Clarke's edition.

visible to our souls through a human personality, approachable through a sacrifice, and efficient through the power of the Spirit. A million messengers and witnesses may bring us wisdom, but Christ is the Personal Agent who employs them all.

When a Sunday calms us, it is Christ who gives the peace. When the Bible guides us, it is Christ who fills its lamp with living radiance. A letter, or a parting counsel, or a touching act of human kindness, may hold the lesson, but it is Christ who teaches it. We may seem to owe our very soul to words in season, spoken, perhaps, to our inward ear by a dead man, whose thoughts still live in his book; or to our outward ear by some living preacher, but the direct personal interposition of Christ gave those words all their spirit and life; and without Him the mightiest instrument is powerless, as the bow without the archer, the pen without the scribe, or the harp without a hand to sweep its strings.

2. *It is suitable.* "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." If, therefore, we are weary, we are informed that the prescribed end of what He condescended to pass through the earth was that

He might know how to convey teaching in every way suitable to our case.

Suitable to our weariness while we are yet *in a state of unregeneracy*. Unregenerate souls have not yet born within them the capacity to understand the peace of God. In order to efficient instruction, there must be capacity in the learner as well as in the teacher. It is as needful that the one should be able to receive the science, as it is that the other should be able to impart it. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." When, however, Christ finds in a man nothing sympathetic with the light of His holiness, or responsive to the messages He brings from heaven, He knows how to speak so as to kindle that sympathy and waken that response, for the sufferings that culminated on the cross have purchased for Him the right to quicken whom He will, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The only "word in season" to men "dead in trespasses and sins" is a word that gives life, and He knows how to speak that word. He knows how to create the life that mourns for sin, so that when He sets before a soul the lesson of salvation He works within that soul the faculty to learn it. This is a sublime distinc-

tion of His teaching, to which other schools can show no counterpart. They require a prior capacity on the part of the pupil—a capacity which no master can supply. A dumb man will never be an orator, though Quintilian himself lay down rules for his instruction; though Michael Angelo be the teacher, no blind man will ever learn to be an artist; and not even Mozart can teach a deaf man music; but when Christ comes to men who have hitherto spoken no word of devotion, or whose souls are deaf and blind to all grand and holy spiritualities, He makes the blind to see His glory, the deaf to hear His voice, and the dumb to speak His praise.

Suitable to our weariness when we are *sinking under the burden of guilt.* "I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden on his back. I looked, and saw him open the book and read therein, and as he read he wept and trembled, and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, saying, 'What shall I do?'" This sentence is like a mirror in which every penitent can see the reflection of himself. It is not only true to English nature, but true to nature everywhere when first it knows, from the teaching of Christ, what sin is. Pilgrims from every land, on setting out for the

celestial city, groan under "a great burden." "Great Spirit, untie the load of our sins. If this load were bound round our shoulders we could untie it for ourselves, as it is bound round our hearts we cannot untie it, but Thou canst. Lord, untie the burden now!"* Such was the simple prayer of a Fejee Islander, and such may be your own prayer, for if you are now beginning to understand the evil of sin, no words can more naturally express your own deepest consciousness. There is nothing so heavy as guilt; there is nothing that makes us feel so helpless; there is nothing that wears out the life into such a sense of dead fatigue. You would sever yourself from all that nature loves, and link yourself to all that nature loathes, would give anything, do anything, suffer anything, to fling off that burning incubus, and to gain a healthy sense of rest.

Christ has lived and died that He might know how to speak to weary men like you a word in season. The only knowledge you now care for is experimental knowledge of what is adapted to remove the cause of your disquietude, and here is a teacher who knows how to give that knowledge. The law of God demands from you a perfect obedience; you are unable to meet that demand, and are there-

* Journal of Wesleyan Missions.

fore under condemnation. This is your burden. All the while Christ was on earth He was learning how to take that burden from you. "Though he were a son, yet from the things that he suffered learned he the obedience." That is, "*the* obedience"* required by the law from the Saviour, before sinners can be justified, and thus have peace with God. He may be said to have *learned* to render this by the things that He suffered, because these things subjected His human nature to its utmost test, brought it to its utmost perfection, and furnished the conditions through which He carried its obedience to the utmost point of possibility. Having accomplished this redeeming obedience, He now teaches us to trust to it as the ground on which the law consents to justify us; the law accepting those who have no righteousness of their own, on account of the righteousness provided by their representative. In all respects the "author of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings." The discipline of pain was the medium through which He found a Gospel for us; in this way He wrought out the very materials of His teaching, and gained authority to say, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

* την ὑπακοην Hebrews v. 8.

Suitable to our weariness *when fainting under the burden of care.* Almost every traveller you meet in life's highway has some secret care weighing down his soul. Tense, tight features; fading eyes; heavy, inelastic steps; shadows on the countenance; hair turning white before its time, sometimes tell to lookers-on the story of that burden; but more commonly surfaces conceal it, and the greatest griefs are griefs that make no sign. Men often hide the anguish of which they soon will die; tempests of feeling often work beneath an unchanged face; there may be a broken heart beneath the folds of a bridal veil, and levity may disguise despair. If even Christians were to read out the diaries of their most sacred life, it might be found that those of you who look most calm and free are even now well-nigh stifled beneath some weight that you never speak of; and that burdens of family sorrow, burdens of commercial entanglement, or burdens which seem to have no type in those of other men, almost crush out the life of prayer, and keep your spirits cleaving to the dust.

But Jesus is here, waiting with infinite kindness that you may ask Him what to do. When you are ready to learn, He is ready to teach. Like a strain of old, sweet music, slighted in happier

days, but tenderly delightful now, there is perhaps floating into your mind the memory of a promise. It has just been summoned by the mention of the Saviour's name, in connection with the sense of your own burdens: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee"; "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." But even these "words in season" brighten you only for a moment. Some burdened sufferer is whispering, "My case is so extreme, my strength so spent, and my burden so overwhelms me, that I am unequal to the task even of '*casting*' it on God. To 'cast' is an act of violent power. To '*cast*' a burden there must be strength to stoop, to spring again, and then to make a throw. Prone in the dust, trembling there under the weight that is lashed upon me, my nerve exhausted, and my spirit gone; if my burden is to remain until I cast it on God, it must remain for ever."

Brother, to cast your burden upon the Lord is to cast *yourself* upon Him—yourself, with all you carry. Such an act, it is true, is an act of resolved exertion, but the "Lord of all power and might" will work within you while you make it. As He strengthened the beloved Apostle to rise from the ground to which he had sunk in weakness, so will

He strengthen you to rise and fling all your weight on to Him. Make but trial of His love. Cast your own self upon the Lord, and although the burden may still be on your soul, the weight of that burden will go right through you to the arm on which you rest. You will, in fact, pass it on to Omnipotence. Before that act of faith, you might have almost felt as if, Atlas-like, you had the world on your shoulders; after it, though outward facts are unchanged, and to the common view all the burden is still the same in its form, you are able to transmit all its pressure. So does the Teacher who knows how to take the sting out of death, know how to take the heaviness out of care.

Suitable to our weariness when *burdened under the intellectual mysteries of Theology.* This is a burden to which many persons are absolute strangers. Although they have professed to enter Christ's school, they have no intention to learn anything beyond the first lesson taught there. Their one wish is, not to be wise, or strong, or useful, or heroic, but simply to be safe. They know that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners"; they know that "whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life"; they know by name the truths that are

more immediately related to these first principles, and are inclined to take credit to themselves for wishing to know no more. A Christian of this class would deem it almost sinful to say, as Robinson did, "I am verily persuaded that the Lord has yet more truth to break forth out of His holy word." He is incapable of learning. Though he may be loud in his plaudits of certain profitable books and ministers, "what he means by an instructive ministry is a ministry from which he does not receive anything which he did not possess before. By an instructive book, he means a book all of whose excellences can be summed up in the commentary, 'I have thought the very same thing myself a thousand times.'"*

If such a theory of discipleship is to be accepted, then it was a mistake on the part of infinite wisdom to furnish disciples with the grand apparatus of Divine teaching in the midst of which they live. The greater part of the glorious Bible is comparatively wasted and worthless. The only teaching absolutely needful is that of the single sentence which answers the cry, "What must I do to be saved?" There is no solution for the fact that to those, and to those only, who are saved

* Journal of Sacred Literature, Oct., 1860. Art. on the Morality of Religious Controversy.

already, is the promise given of the Spirit that will "lead into all truth." The thinking faculties are not wanted in religion. The greatest subjects never ask for them, and the meanest may claim them all. But we have "not so learned Christ." He has visited the earth, not only to teach us what we must do *to be* saved, but what we must do when *we are* saved. He has given us all the world for our school, and all the Bible for His text-book of our study. He summons all our powers, and waits to fill those powers with the Holy Spirit, that as we search the Scriptures daily, we may see further into their infinite depths of truth, trace more distinctly the harmonious balance of their doctrines, and find out more of the tenderness, the glory, and the manifold wisdom of God. Thus the Teacher is ever schooling us that He may enlarge our hearts, raise our manhood, make our graces grow; and educate our souls for love, for worship, and for service on earth and in heaven.

In such a course of instruction the disciple has frequently to learn hard lessons, and to encounter great difficulties. The difficulties form an essential part of the discipline. But some minds have, more than others, a natural tendency to fasten on what is difficult, and to overlook what is plain. Their trust in the known is disturbed by their

distress at the unknown. Fascinated by the great problems of conscience, or the great mysteries of faith, they spend their strength on these, and for a great part of their time feel alive to nothing else. The result is weariness. They sink into exhaustion after their faculties have been stimulated into preternatural intensity in trying to explain just now what the Master has left for future explanation, and their weariness is increased by the perplexity which comes from the conflicting opinions of men.

The weary thinker looks round for some judge who has power to decide all controversies, and give his spirit rest. On the one hand, he is tempted to rest in the authority of human reason Yielding to this temptation, he takes nothing even from Christ on trust, believes nothing that his own powers are unable to discover or interpret, and at last surrenders himself to the apathy of blank unbelief. On the other hand, he is tempted to rest in the authority of the Church. Yielding to this, he shuts his eyes, takes blindly the dictum of the priest, absolutely delivers up his intellect, hands over his responsibility to some ecclesiastical keeper, and drops into the false rest of a mind that refuses to think, and that has lost the use of its existence.

But why do we want infallibility out of God?

What authority can we have so final as that of the Throne? Who can so surely teach us the things that relate to Christ, as Christ Himself? How is it likely that any voice that speaks to us from earth can give us more clear and decisive testimony as to the things of heaven, than can the voice of "Him that speaketh from heaven"? These questions seem to be unanswerable: at the same time, believing, as we do, on evidence that strengthens every year, that the *letter* of Christ's doctrine is all gathered up in the Bible, and that His interpreting Spirit will be given to "every one that asketh," for the explanation of all essential things in that letter that may still seem doubtful, we find our way to true and solid repose. We believe that though our Master, wise in His speech, and wise in His silence, may not give us all the knowledge we wish for, He will give us all the knowledge we need. We are sure that when some exciting secret breaks our rest He will always open that secret to our reason, or make the reason satisfied to leave it sealed. "Before a confessed and unconquerable difficulty the mind, if in a healthy state, reposes as quietly as when in possession of a discovered truth; as quietly and contentedly as we are accustomed to bear that law of our nature which denies us the power of seeing through all space, or of being exempt

from sickness and decay."* Gradually bringing into this healthy mood of mind all who consent to be led by the Spirit and His word, He thus gradually brings them into visible unity and perfect rest.

Suitable to our weariness *when under the burden of mortal infirmity.* Infirmities brought on by sickness, toil, or old age, may darken and impede the life of thought, and make the body a burden to the soul. But though Christ gives lessons that call out to the last possibility the powers of a mind when in the glorious prime of its strength, He knows how to teach minds that are too weak and weary to learn in any other school.

"The faint old man sits down by the wayside a-weary." He is past learning much from books, for his eyes are dim; or from preachers, for his ears are dull of hearing. His memory is almost gone, his mind shines but with a dim, unsteady light. Something has just been said to him which he was slow to comprehend, and the speaker has turned away with an air of impatience. At first he thought within himself—

> "I am a useless hull, 'tis time I sunk;
> I am in all men's way, I trouble them,
> I am a trouble to myself."†

But Christ has spoken to his soul, and dispersed

* Dr. Arnold. † Jean Ingelow.

those sad imaginations, by the power of thoughts that light up his withered features with the spirit of beauty, and renew his inward strength; for "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."*

There sits a man who was once an active thinker. But his day is over; his power is waning; a dread shadow is falling; he has just tried to read one of his own books, but could not understand it; or he has been labouring to cast up a column in arithmetic, and, child's lesson as it was, he has failed. Tears glisten through the fingers that he clasps across his face. Man would say, "Put away your books and papers, for your thinking days are over, and you will learn no more." But he can understand things that can make him wise unto salvation. When other teachers have gone their way, Christ comes, and with a voice gentle yet majestic as that which fills the earth with the soft overflow of morning light, says, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest to your

* Is. xl. 29—31.

soul. Only trust Me, and you shall never be ashamed or confounded, world without end: follow Me, and I will lead you to the land where your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw its shining; for the Lord God shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended."

A labourer comes in at sundown, all dusty from his work. In the early twilight he must begin his round of toil again. Mere fatigue holds all his powers and keeps them from free play. The only life he is conscious of is the life of the body. Tell him something that appeals to his mind, and he will say, "I am too weary for listening to you now, come some other day." But when for a few moments that work-worn man takes up his Bible. Christ knows how to quicken his languid attention, and sometimes, swift as a bright arrow of light shot through the forest-roof on a stormy day, a word from heaven drops into his soul, and fills it with "the soul's calm sunshine."

Step softly; stop; stand in reverent silence, and look upon your dying friend. You doubt if he knows you now. Earthly teachers can say no more to him, for he is done with earth. You almost think that sleep has melted into death, and that the soul is already beyond the stars. But hush!

the lips move in the mention of a name. What name—"Raphael"? "Shakespeare"? "Cromwell"? No, it is "Christ." It is the soul's response to Christ's last lesson. Christ is saying, and well does the half-glorified one understand His speech, "I am come that I may receive you unto myself, that where I am you may be also."

3. The teaching of Christ is *minutely direct and particular.* When I read that He is ordained to speak "*to him* that is weary," I understand that He does not speak in a general, impersonal, unrecognizing way to the forlorn crowd of sufferers, but to every man in particular, and to every man apart. "Thomas Woolman, I have a word for *thee.*" So did a devout mystic once think himself addressed by the Saviour, and although the voice heard in the air was an illusion wrought by the magic of his fancy, there would have been nothing fanciful in the belief that he was thus called by a voice heard in his soul; for the Good Shepherd "calleth his own sheep *by name*, and leadeth them out." Disciple, "the Master is come and calleth for *thee.*" Every hour He is saying, "I have a word for *thee.*" He speaks to thee with select, special, discriminating tenderness—

> "Thou art as much His care as if beside
> Nor man nor angel lived in all the earth;

The sunbeams pour alike their glorious tide
To light a world, or wake an insect's birth :
They shine and shine with unexhausted store ;
Thou art thy Saviour's darling—seek no more."

It is just as certain that the Saviour's words have minutely particular adaptiveness to every moment of the soul's history. Each word of His is "a word in *season*." Solomon calls wisdom "a tree of life" ; and the heavenly Teacher's wisdom is like the mystical tree of life, bearing "twelve manner of fruits, and yielding her fruit every month." You can never go to that tree out of season ; you can never go to it seeking fruit and finding none. In the soul's summer or winter, in its seedtime or harvest, in its days of brightness or its nights of gloom, it can gather from that tree appropriate food ; for as one has said, "you carry with you the season, and make it the season of the tree." For the season of straitness, for the season of peace, for the season of storms, even for seasons such as you have never known and never heard of before, Christ has always a seasonable word. He is always waiting to whisper some secret of Divine wisdom, to convey some influence of Divine help, and whatever your want may be—whatever your peril—when Christ speaks, His word is in exact adaptation to the particular exigency of *to-day*.

THE REFINER WATCHING THE CRUCIBLE.

VII.

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shal suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

"But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap:

"And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."—MAL. iii. 1—3.

The Refiner watching the Crucible.

"My dark and cloudy words, they do but hold
The truth, as cabinets enclose the gold."

SO did the Puritan symbolist speak. So might the Hebrew prophet have spoken. At least, such a description might have applied to this particular prophecy on the day of its utterance. It may be a bright saying now, but it was a dark saying then. Though it contained a clear disclosure of the truth that Christ would come, it locked in hieroglyphic language the truth in relation to the manner and purpose of His coming. The human mind was not yet prepared to understand it. Time alone could be its interpreter. Its explanation had to wait for its fulfilment.

Interpreting the prediction by the event, let us read what it says,—

I. AS TO THE MANNER OF THE SAVIOUR'S COMING.

1. He was to come *announced by a forerunner.* "Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare my way before me." On a certain day, four hundred years after Malachi had uttered this dark saying upon his harp, its true meaning began for the first time to glimmer into light. About that time, at Hebron, a city whose roofs, white amongst the green hills, might just be seen from the turrets of the temple, a child was born, who was marked out by signs and tokens from the awful other world, as one who would live to take some great and extraordinary part on the stage of human action. Both parents were old. The father was a priest, and along with other rumours that were floating, it was said that just before his child's birth he had seen an angel, and that ever since that sight he had been dumb—charged with a secret that he was thus unable to divulge. What was that secret? Eager to know it, the villagers crowded to the house on the day appointed for the infant to be devoted to God according to the solemnities of the old Sinaitic ritual, when, all at once, while the question was whispered round, "What manner of child shall this be?"—Zachariah's speech returned, and filled with the

spirit of prophecy, he cried out, "Thou child shalt be called the prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His way." The company broke up, the years rolled on, the child became a man. Led by an unseen guide, he left his birthplace, and haunted the still, wild region round the spot where, ages back, the bannered hosts of God crossed the Jordan to take possession of the land. There, clad in hairy raiment such as prophets used to wear, and living on such simple food as the desert could supply, he thought, and prayed, and waited. When about thirty years of age he knew that his hour was come. I can imagine how his marvellous ministry began. See him beneath the shadow of a rock, or the shelter of a plane-tree near the river. A solitary traveller is crossing the fords. He rises, goes to meet him, and says, with a strange authority that can only belong to a prophet of the Invisible, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" "Who art thou?" asks the awe-struck man; and he replies, "A voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." The traveller hastens to the city, and tells his adventure to other men; they tell it to more. The Jews are at this moment on the out-look for a sign to certify that their Lord is

near. The whole community is electrified at a stroke. Solemn congregations throng to the wilderness to hear the heaven-sent preacher. Awed by his stern sanctity, enchained by his thrilling tones, self-condemned as he speaks of their coming king, and puts it to them if they are prepared for a visitor so holy, and a kingdom so divine, they are baptized of him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. Just as a host of pioneers preceded the march of an eastern emperor, paving miry spaces, arching streams, and cutting down trees that were netted across his path, John was endowed so as to personify and express the concentrated power of a host "preparing the way of the Lord." The tendency of his keen, rugged, shattering speech was to cleave through the forests and mountains of the human heart, to strike down pride, formalism, and self-sufficiency, and thus to open a way for Christ's cordial reception and triumphal reign. To him the finger of Providence pointed, on him the lights of prophecy fell, and the Saviour Himself said of him, "This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face to prepare thy way before thee." *

2. He was to come *to fulfil a great commission.*

* Matt. xi. 10.

"The Lord whom ye seek, even the messenger of the covenant, behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts." Look no longer on John—the morning star is lost in daylight when the sun appears. We may look on the forerunner while the forerunner is alone, but soon as we hear the crowd cry, "The King, the King!" the King alone is thought of. Yet, not riding in pomp, not leading the armies of His power, not shining with the symbols of supreme dominion, does our King come. King though He is, He comes as a messenger. By an act of ineffable sacrifice, humility, and transformation, and in obedience to a necessity of government which could not be explained by such poor instruments as human words, He has entered into a capacity to sustain the office of Angel from the invisible Father to His lost children. He has come to negotiate and fulfil the terms of the covenant by which the lost are saved and the dead made to live again.

> "Arrayed in mortal flesh
> He like an angel stands,
> And holds the promises
> And pardons in His hands;
> Commissioned from His Father's throne
> To make His grace to mortals known."

3. He was to come *suddenly.*

"The Lord whom ye seek shall come suddenly

into his temple." As events unfolded, and the fulness of time drew nigh, the recollection of this sentence made all hearts beat high with expectation of some sudden vision of the Lord from heaven, and all eyes turn to the temple as its predicted scene. He might any moment flash down *there*. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," while the people were waiting in the court, and the priest serving at the shrine, a form of superhuman might and beauty might lighten into view, and stand on that consecrated spot to fill it with glory and make it the centre of a power that should raise Judea to the throne of the world. It was doubtless with reference to the wide-spread expectation awakened by this prophecy that, giving to a mental act the life and force belonging to the world of sight and sound, the Tempter placed Christ on the pinnacle of the temple, and, pointing down the sheer depth to the crowded courts below, whispered, "*Cast thyself down.*" The suggestion was keen with diabolic subtlety. It looked as if it did but call the Son of man at once to do His Father's will, at once to win His people's homage; for it seemed in all human likelihood that if He had thus first dashed down like a lightning stroke among them, such a sign would have harmonized with their preconceptions,

would have been accepted as the fulfilment of prophecy, would have convinced them in a moment of his claims, and would have fired them with such an enthusiasm of loyalty, that He might at once, without a cross, have reached His crown. But all-merciful power delights in quiet operations; it is seldom sudden, is never at liberty to save undone spirits without some foregoing sacrifice. Christ could not come suddenly in the way the Jews expected. He was not to come so as to dispense with the cross. He was not to put away sin without the sacrifice of Himself. He was not to compel faith, to destroy freedom of will, and by a sudden, explosive, dramatic manifestation, to storm the soul through the senses. This was no Divine way of working, no Divine way of saving. The Holy One recoiled from the thought, for it was a whisper from Hell!

The sudden coming of the Lord to the temple, as I understand the expression, was intended not so much to be fulfilled in any one particular historic instance of His appearance there, as in the general fact that He appeared in a surprising and unexpected manner. While men were looking for Him in one way, He came in another. While they were looking up the road of power and great glory, and wondering that His chariot wheels were so long in

coming, He had suddenly come in the path of humility, poverty, and pain. Many a time was He standing in the temple, while the worshippers, unconscious of His presence as a Divine person, were talking to each other about His expected visit, and before they knew He had been there—He was gone!

II. We have now to ponder what is said of A CERTAIN WORK THAT THE MESSIAH WAS COMING TO ACCOMPLISH. "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness."

The worldly priests and hollow professors of religion who stood round the seer to hear him tell what he saw in the "far distances," were confounded when he said this. It was not what they expected. It woke up all their fears. It was darkly suggestive of all their spirits most recoiled from. Put upon it what construction they might, it was not in keeping with their creed, and lent no images that would mingle with their visions of delight. It seemed as if the prophet meant to say,

"The messenger of the covenant whom you delight in," whose face you long to see, and whose name is ever on your lips, is not the personage you take him for. You are all the while delighting in an ideal Christ, and when the true Christ comes, instead of finding in Him the hero of your proud romance, and the soother of your indolence, the first operation of His power will be to try your souls by the agony of sharp fire.

We may look upon the figurative expression, "He shall purify the sons of Levi," as having both an outward and an inward significance. Outwardly, it pointed to the Jewish priesthood, and may have meant, as a great critic thinks, "that Christ was to purify and retrieve from abuse the Levitical institution by fulfilling on the cross its great moral design";* or it may have meant that many base and degenerate priests should, amidst much trial, become followers of the Nazarene; and this we know was a meaning that passed into fact in the lifetime of the Apostles, "when a great multitude of the priests became obedient to the faith."

Yet above and beyond its use to designate the ministers of the temple, the term priesthood always had an inward reference. The essence of

* Dr. J. P. Smith. Sacrifice and Priesthood of Christ, p. 97.

truth is always the same, and even under the reign of Old Testament symbols, all spiritual worshippers were, as they are now, God's true priests. Outwardly, the function belonged to the sons of Levi only, but in a deeper sense it belonged even then to all elect souls. The New Testament knows no other priesthood than theirs. Anticipating the day in which we live, and predictively speaking of Christians alone, God, by His prophet Isaiah, said, "I will take of them for priests and for *Levites*."*

Now I think that this is the priesthood spoken of by Malachi. He had just prophesied that "in *every place* incense should be offered to the Lord, and a pure offering"; a prophecy, the fulfilment of which would demand that the laws of local sanctity should cease, and would imply the extension through all the world of that which, if understood in the mere Hebrew sense of the word, must have been restricted to Jerusalem. Discoursing of the same times in the same style, he says: "He shall purify the sons of Levi; and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness." Presenting in a Jewish dress a Christian thought, using language whose full meaning must be a Christian meaning, he asserts that one distinctive work of Christ will

* Isa. lxvi. 21.

be to refine His people; to refine them by trials sharp and searching as the furnace-heat employed to test and clarify gold and silver; that so, by making them holy, He may fit them for the functions of a holy life. This, brethren, is what you must look for, if you are "a holy priesthood," ordained "to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."*

Looking into the text that we may more completely discover its meaning, we find that it sets before us :—

1. The *severity* of the trials through which Christians may be called to pass. It is a trial by fire. To slight sorrow, to count it a common thing to affect a lofty independence of it, to speak of it as if you thought it nothing, is no victory of heroism, no sign of high religious life. It rather suggests the suspicion that you know no real sorrow, or that you feel no real resignation, or that the sorrows you speak of are not your own, but only those of other men. Another man's burden *may* be light to you, but it is not light to him who bears it. If in time it should seem light to him through the action of certain countervailing thoughts, and small when weighed in the balance with eternal things, it is neither light nor small in itself; and those who

* Ex. xix. 6; 1 Peter ii. 5

are upon the whole most wondrously sustained have moments of crushing distress, when they are conscious of only just enough help from heaven to keep them from utterly and for ever giving way beneath the weight of the cross they carry. I fear that we sometimes sing of "sweet affliction" without weighing what we mean. The metaphors employed by Divine penmen to picture trial, show that in the estimation of Him who knows our frame no true trial is easy to endure. One of the most frequent of these metaphors is now before us. Sentimentalists may call trial by some gentle name. God calls it fire. Fire is pain; fire is power; fire is that in which nothing without a miracle can live. Before its raging strength we cower in terrified weakness, and when stung by a spark of fire we start in agony. It is the symbol of all that our nature most shrinks from, yet it is the symbol of what our nature must pass through. Be sure of this,—every affliction that really serves the purposes of trial feels to the soul like fire. Perhaps a mere trifle may have set it alight; perhaps, whatever may be inwardly working, nothing is outwardly seen. The cause of trouble may be only some commonplace question about money, but it is wearing out your soul like a fire; or it may be only the chronic ill-temper of some member of your

family, but it has set smouldering round your heart, a still slow fire; or it may be only a random word from a child, but that random word has struck you through with fire; or it may be only a line traced with a pen, as, for instance, when a person hands you in silence a telegraphic message; you glance at it, and in a moment your soul is filled with fire; keen, sharp, alive, devouring: or it may be only a whispered secret affecting your friend that touches your ear, and suddenly a fire flames up. Sometimes words of slander set the soul in a blaze; sometimes the darts of the wicked one, and sometimes all the calamities of life, seem to rush and strike in one burning storm, tearing up your heart, and melting it, as fierce fires break up the silver, and melt it into a scintillating stream.

2. The *agency* by which the trial is wrought. It is the Lord; therefore let no man's heart fail him. "*He*" shall do all this.

He alone *appoints* it. The will of no other being can make you suffer trial at a time when He has ordained that you shall not suffer it. Vain was it for the king of Babylon to command a furnace to be heated to sevenfold fury, and then to see the three confessors flung bound and helpless in the midst of it; for it was not the will of their Lord that they should suffer thus, or suffer then. The

flames played harmlessly over them. They trod the floor of white fire as if their feet but dipped in dewy grass. As if the burning air had been tempered into golden sunlight, they rejoiced in it, and no place where honeysuckles wave and cool breezes blow could be so refreshing to us, as was the furnace itself to them, for God was there,—there by His Spirit, there by His wonder-working power, there to say to the death-forces that stormed around them, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." Just the same as ever, He reigns the only Lord of His people's trials, and no adverse power can rend them without His permissive will.

He alone *effects* it. Affliction may be the fire, but Christ is the Refiner. Whatever instrument may cause the nerves to agonize and the heart to grieve, the Lord Himself holds it. The tool may be malignity, but the worker is love. We may be in the hand of our enemy, but the enemy himself is in the hand of God.* That which aims to destroy is used as the unconscious medium of serving the purpose of that which designs to bless.

He is *present* all through the operation of the trial. As much as the act of refining silver implies the presence of the refiner, the affliction of a Chris-

* "If tempted when in Satan's hands, remember that he is in God's hands."—Manton: quoted by M. Grosart.

tian implies the presence of Christ. The process could not be carried on without Him. When I enter the chamber of such a patient, besides the mortal companion, my faith sees "One like unto the Son of man." Shadowy conceptions of Him who is invisible condense around the recollected facts of our Saviour's human life, and I feel that sure as in the days of His flesh He was present with Peter, James, or John, He is now with my brother. I dwell upon the thought until the thought awes yet delights me, and I can speak to Christ almost as if I saw Him. He is almost visible, almost audible; and the doctrine of the Incarnation helps me, as it was intended to help me, to think, feel, and pray my way into the presence of God. God is in Christ, and Christ is in this room. There He is. There, by the side of His afflicted disciple, He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver. There He is, "a very present help in time of trouble." *Very* present; closer than close, nearer than near; making him who is sorely tried a wonder to himself and a wonder to me. When he comes into the light of the living again he will look back upon this day's experience with surprise, and say, "I never could have lived through it if Christ had not been with me." There He is, to comfort with assurances of Divine sympathy. No visible friend,

however loving, who sits by that poor man, holding his hot hand, or fanning his fevered brow, can even faintly understand the gentle tenderness of the unseen Saviour's heart, for it is infinite. The querulousness, the doubt, the infirmity of that poor child of mortality "might wear out his mother," but it will not tire Jesus. Jesus has already suffered life for him, suffered death for him, suffered for him beyond our power of conception, and He will not leave him now. There He is, ready to take him into His confidence, to tell him secrets, and to make hidden meanings sparkle out from lines in his Bible that before seemed blank and unappealing. Like a refiner by the crucible,—overseeing that the fire be not too fierce or too slack, the trial not too long or too short; marking every change, ruling every particular, that nothing shall be left to chance, nothing to forgetfulness; ready to stop the works in a moment, when the right moment comes; only waiting to see the scum float away, the flickering wave of vapour go out, and his own face mirrored in the clear, translucent, liquid silver,—so into the troubled heart does Jesus look, and by it wait with the patience of infinite love, until His own reflected image in it shows that the process is complete, and that the trouble for a time may cease.*

* "When the alloy is melted upon a cupel, and the air blown upon it the sur-

3. The *utility* of the trial.

It is *a sign of preciousness.* You never try that which is unquestionably worthless. Do you cast a stone into the crucible? Do you winnow chaff? Do you prune a bramble? Do you plough a rock? Do you put a cinder to the friction of a lapidary's wheel? It would be only a waste of thought to show that the trial of a soul is a sign of something within that soul that is "precious in the sight of the Lord." Satan is never tried; sin is never tried. The Refiner never expends His skill and love in trying what "is evil, and only evil, and that continually." While He is subjecting dross to the high heat of adversity, it is only because, mixed with it, He detects a divine particle which cost the sacrifice of Calvary, which transcends the worth of worlds, and which is destined to shine for ever. When, therefore, a resistless Hand draws my life through a medium that seems almost like death to me; when trouble wrings from my heart the sharp

face of the melted metals has a deep orange-red colour, with a kind of flickering wave constantly passing over the surface. As the process goes on the heat is increased, and in a little, the colour of the fused metal becomes lighter. At this stage the refiner watches the operation, either standing or sitting, with the greatest earnestness, until all the orange colour and shading disappears, and the metal has the appearance of a highly-polished mirror, reflecting every object around it. Even the refiner, as he looks upon the mass of metal, may see himself as in a looking-glass, and thus he can form a very correct judgment respecting the purity of the metal. If he is satisfied the fire is withdrawn and the metal removed from the furnace; but if not considered pure more lead is added, and the process repeated."—"Napier on the Metaphors of the Bible," p. 24.

cry of consternation; when I am tempted to doubt my safety, and even to doubt my Saviour; when I ask the question, "If I am His, why am I thus?" I know that the reply of the soul to itself will be, "I am thus because I am His. Patience, patience! He tries me because He loves me, and is leading me 'through fire and through water,' only that I may be most surely led at last into 'a wealthy place.'"

*It is a test of genuineness.** Trial is the grand revealer of character, the certain analyst of life. God knows you, my poor man, but you will not know yourself until you are tried. Not until he was tried did Abraham know that he could for a moment be false. Not until he was tried did Moses know what storms slept beneath his peace, what passion beneath his gentleness. Not until he was tried did Peter suspect in himself the secret possibilities of cowardice in the wars of the

* "Suffering is a searching thing. It tries a man as fire doth metals; sifts and winnows him as corn is shaken in a sieve, and discovers his thoughts to the bottom of his heart. Many a man seems fully for God, yet when the test comes proves to be for the world; therefore it is very proper for us to be in a posture for suffering, and to search ourselves beforehand: to try ourselves inwardly before the outward trial come; to sift and winnow ourselves before Providence do it; to discover our hearts to ourselves before God discover them to others; this is God's own direction to His people, as the words in the original may be rendered, 'Search, lift yourselves; yea, search, lift yourselves, O nation not desired; before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you'—Zeph. ii. 1, 2.'—"Armatura Dei." By Edward Polhill, Esq., 1682, p. 25.

Lord. Many a weakling has thought himself strong; many a novice has thought himself wise; many a tiresome child has thought himself a valiant man; many a sufferer from his own folly has thought himself a martyr for his faith, until trial came, and then he has found himself out. Startled at what the fire revealed, his soul has exclaimed, "Is *that* paltry temper the thing that I have been mistaking for an inspired and divine sentiment!" There are depths of undiscovered character in us all. Before some searching test begins to work, ignorant of what may be latent in those depths, we impose upon ourselves by shows and surfaces. Chaff looks like wheat, gilding looks like gold; nature looks like grace. I am not speaking of conscious and intentional hypocrisy, but of that self-deception and self-ignorance which trial alone is likely to bring into the clear daylight. I do not say that you are an insincere man, yet before you are aware, you may have gradually woven into the tissue of your life many "small insincerities." To borrow the idea of Johnson, "I do not designate a character from its casual defects or foreign admixtures, but from what it is upon the whole. Though a block of tin has in it a streak of silver, we call it only tin; though a block of silver has in it an alloy of tin, it is a

block of silver still." You may be true silver,—all I say is, that you may hold much alloy, and yet not know it. You know much about religion; how much of that knowledge is a mere memory of terms, how much of it is life? You feel much; how much of that feeling springs from mere natural sensibility, how much from earnest principle? You profess much; how much of that profession is merely dramatic, how much true? You understand "the language of Canaan"; but how does your scholarship differ from that of Milton's daughters, who understood Greek and Hebrew so as to pronounce the syllables, but without understanding the sense? You are a generous man; how much has that generosity cost you? You are a man of stainless integrity; how far has that integrity been tried? You hate falsehood; yes; when stung by slander, you hate false blame; but how do you bear false praise?* It is the function of trial to discover and bring into light the true man, and the experience of all the world, through all its history, is condensed into the proverb, "No man knows what he is until he is tried."

It is a medium of purification. The dust, the stones, the grains of sand which fire finds in the

* Mr. Robertson has somewhere suggested this test of our feelings with regard to slander.

silver it will not leave there. More than a mere detective agent, it is also a purifier, working mightily, until at length it works out from the true metal the base corrosive elements. Like this does pain act upon a soul. Not, however, by its own inherent force. The glorified Mediator, infinitely stored with the Holy Spirit for the purposes of His mediatorial work, does, by that Spirit alone, give Divine efficiency to the trials of His people, making them His instrument first to detect the foreign quality, next to expel it.* He will *detect* it; that self-discovery, leading to self-despair, may compel you to look out of yourselves for the only righteousness that can inspire courage for facing the "great white throne." He will *expel* it. No man may carry a particle of it into heaven with him.

All whom Jesus justifies He sanctifies; and I think the sanctifying agency is chiefly operative through trial. Sorrow is certain to come after sin, that heavenly joy may come after sorrow. You are allowing some levity to frivolize your life; expect some sorrow to make you live in

* "It is in the administration of His Spirit that at His coming 'He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver'; and we see what work He accomplishes thereby. The Holy Ghost, who is the great Pleader for the saints and in them, doth at such a time (of suffering) effectually plead with them, by convictions, persuasions, arguings, applications of the words, motions, strivings, and the like."—Dr. Joh Owen; Sermon on 2 Peter iii. 11.

earnest. You are allowing some idol to take Christ's place in your heart; expect some bewildering flash to shiver it, and leave your heart in ruins. You are allowing the world to master you; the material is shutting out the spiritual, and man hides God; expect some dread visitation to darken your day, and to turn your garden of social delight into a wilderness; that, each intervening object being thrown down, the soul may see Him who is invisible, and become sensitive to the music of His still small voice. You are wandering from Christ. Back! back to Him at once; for if you wander on, and fall into some alarming sin, sure as He loves you He will fetch you home by the violence of some dread angel, whose scathing hand will leave a brand upon you till your dying day. Saved you will be, yet as by fire; and we may almost say, though you reach the world of the blest at last, you reach it, as Dante in his imaginary travels reached heaven—through hell.

The blood of Jesus Christ, that cleanseth from all sin, is chiefly applied by the Spirit of God through the ministry of sorrow. Already sorrow has blessed us more than we are commonly aware. Proud as we now are, what should we have been if pride had never been mortified? Worldly as

we now are, what should we have been if nothing had interposed to wean us from the world?*

It is a preparative for service. The young Christian, in the beautiful enthusiasms of his early love, and little suspecting the subtle presence of meaner motives, often longs and prays for power to do something great in the world in the service of His Master. He would like to be a great evangelist, or a great teacher, or a great worker, or in some other beneficent way a great ruler over other men's minds. Most likely he has not counted the cost. So it was with the two sons of Zebedee. They went one day to Jesus, and prayed that they might sit the one on His right hand and the other on His left, in His kingdom. But they knew not what they asked. In praying for a share in the glories of His throne, they were unconsciously praying for a share in the agonies of His cross. When the ore in the fable was asking Jupiter that it might be fashioned into a sword, it was asking to be made acquainted with the furnace, and the forge, the sifting stream, and the shattering ham-

* The believer is far too little under the influence of the "powers of the world to come, and is the better for being reminded that this is not his abiding-place. Very profoundly does Augustine put this: 'Behold! the world *troubleth* us, and is loved: What should we do if it were quiet? How wouldst thou cleave to the fair who so embracest the foul? How wouldst thou gather the flowers thereof, who pluckest not thy hand from the thorns?'"—Mr. Grosart, in "Prince of Light and Prince of Darkness," p. 63.

mer-stroke. It was needful for the file to bite and the brazier to burn; it would have to be melted and re-melted before it could be tempered into delicate splendour and strength, and made meet for service in battle. The same thing is true of the ore that we would speak of now.

> "Heated hot with burning fears,
> And bathed in baths of hissing tears,
> And battered by the strokes of doom
> To shape and use :—"

This is the ordeal through which must pass that which is destined to be "a polished shaft" in the hands of our King. Powers of great usefulness can be educated in no other way. Powers of endurance are unknown, where there has been nothing to endure. Powers of rule belong alone to those who have learned to rule by learning to obey. The power of teaching is the special faculty of men who have themselves undergone stern discipline. The power of sympathy is educated in the school of sorrow. Leaders whose souls have never been crucified, and whose plans have never had a failure, are apt to be at best pitiless exactors of righteousness, mere engines for doing duty; iron men, who never melt into compassion; rough men, who knock down weakness, and to whom the fine offices of

consolation are all mysteries. No words can express how much the world owes to sorrow. Most of the Psalms were born in a wilderness. Most of the Epistles were written from a prison. The greatest thoughts of the greatest thinkers have all passed through fire. The greatest poets have "learnt in suffering what they taught in song." In bonds Bunyan lived the allegory that he afterwards indited, and we may thank Bedford jail for the "Pilgrim's Progress." All the foremost worthies of our world, all the spiritual heroes of our race, have been men of sorrow, and acquainted with grief. Take comfort, afflicted Christian! you have often prayed to be made of some service in the world before you die, and now the answer to that prayer has come. God tries you, because in some way He is about to use you; for your history will furnish no exception to the rule, that when God is about to make pre-eminent use of a man He puts him in the fire.

It is the precursor of glory. Pity the mourner, who, while professing to take the cross for the symbol of his faith, and the church for the fountain of his spiritual knowledge, still clings to the doctrine taught by Plato and sung by Virgil, that when the trials of earthly sorrow are over the trials of purgatorial fire begin; and that not until these

have burnt out can the spirit enter into rest.* Cling to the joyful creed, so radiantly distinct in our Gospel revelation, that trial alone belongs to earth, glory alone to heaven; that between earth and heaven there is no interval; but that "absent from the body," the soul is at once "present with the Lord." This faith nerves us with new strength for ourselves; it fills us with new comfort in the prospect of parting with our companions in trial. When that final day draws nigh, our own grief is lost in the thought of their coming rapture. Life

* Plato divided the future world into three distinct parts: the first, the abode of those spirits who had been purified by a Divine philosophy; the second, the abode of the lost, where the wicked endured an immortality of suffering; the third, an intermediate state, where penitents went through a purifying process and from whence, assisted by the prayers and sacrifices of the living, they should have eventual deliverance.

Virgil thus states the doctrine :—

"Nor death itself can wholly wash their stains,
But long contracted filth even in the soul remains
The reliques of inveterate vice they wear,
And spots of sin on every face appear.
For this, are various penances enjoined,
And some are hung to bleach upon the wind,
Some plunged in water, others purged in fires,
Till all the dregs are drained, and all the rust expires."

Æn. Lib. vi., 730.

There is no definition of Purgatory by the Council of Trent, out Bellarmine says, "Purgatory is that place in which the souls of the faithful are purified who were not fully cleansed on earth, in order that they may be prepared for heaven, where nothing entereth that defileth." He recites eight different opinions as to the locality, and is himself of opinion that it must remain amongst those secrets *quæ suo tempore aperientur nobis*. De Purg., Lib. ii., c. 6. The doctrine is a most lucrative one to Rome, by the sale of plenary indulgences. At a church on the Quirinal Hill may be purchased, this morning, a purgatorial release for three thousand years. At another, near the Basilica of St. Paul, you may purchase one for ten thousand years; and at the festival of St. John Lateran you are invited to buy for your souls twenty-nine thousand years of peace.

may have been one long pain, but ah! it will soon be over. As the days dwindle into hours, the hours into moments, and the last sand is about to fall, we say—

"Now the crucible is breaking,
Faith its perfect seal is taking,
Like the gold in furnace tried;
Through the test of sharp distresses,
Those whom heaven most richly blesses,
For its joys are purified.

"Sighs and tears at last are over;
Breaking through its fleshly cover,
Soars the soul to light away.
Who, while here below, can measure
That deep sea of heavenly pleasure,
Spreading there so bright for aye?"

Hartmann: translated by Rev. J. D. Burns.

THE HEALER

VIII.

"Who touched me?"—Luke viii. 45.

The Healer.

"THIS earth," wrote an old essayist, "is a very *Bethaven*, a 'house of affliction.'" Say rather, "it is a *Bethesda*, a 'house of mercy.'"

"I saw the spirits on a day,
Where on the earth in mournful case they lay;
Five porches were there, and a pool, and round,
Huddling in blankets, strewn upon the ground,
Tied up, and bandaged, weary, sore, and spent,
The maimed and halt, diseased and impotent.

"For a great angel came, 'twas said, and stirred
The pool at certain seasons, and the word
Was with the people of the sick, that they
Who in the waters here their limbs should lay,
Before the motion on the surface ceased,
Should of their torment straightway be released.

"So, with shrunk bodies, and with heads down dropt,
Stretched on the steps and on the pillars propped,
Watching by day, and listening through the night,
They filled the place, a melancholy sight."*

Let this scene serve as an allegorical picture

* Arthur Clough.

of the world's spiritual condition. It is crowded with sick spirits, as those old cloisters were with sufferers from physical pain. These spirits are within sight of restorative mercy, as those sufferers were of the miraculous pool. But that pool, with its scanty and periodical virtue, does but poorly shadow forth the richness of our mercy; for the Divine Healer himself is here. He bends over each imploring, wistful face, and whispers, "Wilt thou be made whole?" and to every one who is willing to receive it He gives eternal health. Mercy is never known in the world of the lost; is never needed in the world of the saved; is only imparted here. Sad as are the disorders of human nature that surround us, we may, therefore, call this earth the "Bethesda" of our universe.

Christ's curative miracles, we think, were not only seals of His Divine commission, but signs of His redemptive grace. We think so, first, because physical evils are at once the effects and the emblems of evils that are spiritual. Sin, according as it operates, is the spirit's blindness, the spirit's deafness, the spirit's fever, the spirit's pain, the spirit's debility. "In the law of the leper, Jehovah wrote most fully and most fearfully the natural history of sin." In the passion of the demoniac, we see the symbols of sin's wild misery.

Our persuasion is confirmed when we find that Christ invariably demanded faith from a patient *before* He wrought a miracle to cure him of his malady. In the natural order of things, faith would be looked for *after* a miracle, not before it. If the chief end had been to convince men of His Messiahship, this would have been the order observed by Christ, and we can only account for the strange fact that He always required faith *first*, by concluding that the whole chain of miracles was a course of lessons, and that although they were incidentally intended to serve other purposes, their grand purpose was to show the nature of sin as the soul's sickness, and the way of recovery through faith in a Divine Healer.*

The better to understand our Lord in this relation, instead of diffusing our thought through the whole cycle of His miracles, we shall fix it upon one,—choosing that one which seems to concentre in itself the chief teaching of all the rest.

"And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind him, and touched the border of his garment, and immediately her issue of blood stanched. And

* "Let a man wade deeper herein, and search what secret learning lyeth hyd in this miracle, for even the very doings of Jesu be parables."—Erasmus. Translated by Nicholas Udall.

Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me, for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him, before all the people, for what she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace."*

* "In this prease was there a woman that had an uncurable disease, and had bene sicke thereof the space of xii yere, which was in so much the worse takyng, because she spent all that ever she had on Physicians, and yet for all this so litle was she holpen by Physike that she was in muche worse case than she should have bene if it had not chaunced her to medle with the Physicians at all, who whyles they made many large promises, bothe increased her old griefe, and also added thereunto a newe, that is to saye, povertie. Such undoubtedly are the commune sort of those that professe humayne medicine. But it is ofttimes seene that health is gotten by utter dispayring of health. . . This woman heard but tell of Jesu, and forthwith she conceyved a wonderfull great confidence of him. . . . She came behynd Jesu, and at the length when she had with much ado wound herself out of the prease of people which thrust and thronged one another, then touched she his garment. . . . The Lorde, havying more regarde to God's glory, and the healthe of a greate many, than to the shamefasteness of one woman, knowing rightwell that he was touched, and that the woman had receyved the benefit of health thereby, said, "Who touched my clothes?"

"They that read the Gospell do touch Christe, such as reseive his holy body do the same; but all are not healed whiche do touch him. The woman alone that touched him with strong faith was healed. . . Therefore, when she held her peace, trustying that she might styll have been undescryed, he looked round about upon the people. . . This lokying about of Jesu was a gesture of him that courteously required a confession of the benefit receyved. He would not utter her by name, lest he should have seemed to hit her in the teeth with the good turn he dyd her. It was a pricke or provocation given to make her to put away that unprofitable shamefasteness and to wryng out of her a holsome confession."—THOMAS KEY

We have to trace the history of a touch. No contact is lighter than that of a touch. We say of it, "Only a touch!" Yet the faintest touch has a power which acts and re-acts infinitely, and which produces circle beyond circle of effects which run on, interlace, and multiply for ever. But this was no common touch. There was something in it which gave it peculiar and divine significance. What was it?

I. LET US ENQUIRE WHY THIS TOUCH ATTRACTED THE PARTICULAR ATTENTION OF THE SAVIOUR.

1. It was *the touch of a sufferer whose case before that touch had been desperate.* No need to dwell on her pitiful story. But as God Himself has told that story, told it to all nations, told it in that Book which, as His own manifesto, is destined to be the blazing centre of all publicity, and told it there three times over; this fact is itself a sign that we are not at liberty, from any motives of artificial refinement, to keep it back or pass it by. Pause for a moment, therefore, that you may realize the sad extremity to which this sufferer had been brought. She seemed to belong more to the dead than to the living. Many, in the course of their days, have, so to speak, a momentary interview with Death, and stand frozen into speechless conster-

nation before the "shadow feared of man," but now that shadow was her daily companion. In the morning the shadow waited by her bed; at her table there sat the shadow; and when in spring she crept forth into the sunshine, that shadow was ever at her side. She had been a sufferer twelve years, a sufferer from constant waste of life, a sufferer of many things from many physicians; and at last, to the sorrows of sickness were added the sorrows of poverty, for she had spent all her substance. Spirit was gone, life was desolate and charmless, no hope was left for her in this world, and she was only waiting to die.

Like a martyr fastened to a sea-side stake till the tide crawls along the sand, upward and upward, onward and onward, inch by inch, cold at the foot, cold at the heart, cold at the lips, and at last darkens over his head; so waited she through all these dreary years, dying by gentle gradations, help after help failing, hope after hope kindled only to expire; but just in the crisis when there seemed nothing to look for but the last stroke of human calamity, she found a deliverer, and was saved.

Impressive symbol, this, of what has been felt by many a soul before the moment of vital contact with Jesus. Physicians have prescribed for its

secret and devouring malady, and the prescriptions have proved to be as costly as they were vain. "Try change of scene, try festivity, try forgetfulness, try the talisman of a sound creed, try the charm of ceremonial observance." These and a thousand similar directions have often been heard and followed, till, having striven hard and striven long, conviction has been forced on the sufferer that after all his weary search and wasting toil he has no resource on earth, and no help in man. So it was with the reformer Bilney. Regarding the priests as the authorized physicians of the soul, he tried their prescriptions. He tried fasts, he tried vigils, he tried masses and indulgences, until "his body wasted away, his mind grew weaker, his imagination faded, his purse became empty," and he was, to use his own language, "like the woman that had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and felt none amendment at all, but rather was worse and worse." When shattered and wrung with anguish that seemed no longer endurable, he saw, for the first time in his life, a New Testament. Trembling with eagerness, he turned over its leaves in the hope of finding something suited to his case, until his eye lighted on the words, "This is a faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus

came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." In that moment he touched Christ, and his soul "instantly felt marvellous quietness."

Perhaps there is a page of your own life seldom read aloud, in which is written a similar history, for in every substantial element this experience is a common one. The key of promise is often found in the castle of despair. It is not Christ's way to save us until we know that our case is desperate, and feel that hope from every other source is gone.

The process by which this effect is wrought is often as prolonged as it is severe. He leads us through dark and lonesome paths, brings us down into the very paths of conscious helplessness, and when we have tested every false physician, are brought to the last extremity, and are just at sinking point, strength is made perfect in weakness, and hope in despondency.

2. *It was the touch of faith.* Excluded by the ban of the ceremonial law from every place of concourse, she had not yet seen Jesus, but He was no stranger to her thoughts. Some wind had wafted His name her way; some rumour of His power had reached her; perhaps some kindly neighbours who had witnessed His works, or had drawn delightful inspiration from His words, had

told her all they knew. Through many a silent hour she kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. Travelling far to reach the Blessed One, then pressing through the rough multitude to speak to Him, were achievements beyond her hope, "yet," thought she, "if by some chance I should ever be near Him, though only for one moment, and can but just touch the hem of His garment, I shall be healed." While thus musing one day, there was the rush of many footsteps in the street; she looked out, and saw that which woke within her a fearful joy. What believer could fail to recognize the face in which was reflected the brightness of the Father's glory, even though that face had never been seen before? In an instant, though frail as a leaf before the wind, she found herself, she could not tell how, in the centre of the surging crowd, touching with her thin, transparent fingers Christ's garment.* Had she asked those whom the world deemed most competent to give advice, if the malady which had baffled all the medical skill of Capernaum could be cured by touching the threads of a fringe, the doctors would have speculated on her sanity; the scribes who had written so many

* "She crepte and gotte to Him behynd His backe, and touched the utmost skirt of His garment, weiche with the throng of the people was drawen this waie and that waie."—Nicholas Udall.

amulets and phylacteries to charm the disease away would have condemned her superstition; and all her counsellors would have felt that she had insulted their intelligence. But the act had a deeper meaning than anything they could see. In God's sight it was not the touch of a finger, but the touch of a soul. All her soul went forth in that significant movement. To her thought, such redundant virtue dwelt in the Prophet that His very garments were charged with it, it thrilled through to the outermost threads, and if she could but touch one of those threads she would be hale again. It was faith that made the venture. There was no self-consciousness in the act, there was no merit in it, there was no power, there was no glory, there was only faith. It was not "a work," it was not a payment, it was not an achievement, it was only an act of faith; and by that simple act of faith straightway she took her place amongst the historical types of Christian life to show all the nations how to believe.

3. *It was a touch that wrought an instant and perfect cure.* We need no angel to tell us that blessings never come to man effectually without some kind of mutual touch. Before you touch it, your bed will not rest you; before you touch it, your food will not nourish you; though waters of

a fountain fling their quivering light close by, before you touch those waters they will not slake your thirst.

There must ever be contact, in some appropriate way, between that which takes and that which gives a benefit. The healing miracles of Christ show us that the same law operates in the highest region of things, and that there must be contact between Him and the sick soul before that soul is healed. "The miracles of Jesus," says Robertson, "were not arbitrary acts; they were subject to the laws of the spiritual world. It was, we may humbly say, impossible to convey a spiritual blessing to one who was not spiritually susceptible. A certain inward character—a certain relation (*rapport*)—to the Redeemer, was required to make the mercy efficacious. Hence, in one place we read, 'He could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.' The only touch which reaches God is that of faith." The secret Spirit had kindled in the mind of the woman of Capernaum this faith. She expressed it by a touch; through this touch virtue passed to her from Christ, and she was not only cured, but cured instantly and perfectly. She had not to go home, wait patiently, and receive by slow degrees the blessing sought; but then and there the sensations

of forgotten health streamed through her frame. Quick as thought, she was pierced with invigorating delight. That touch was more than magical. It struck light into the languid eye, fire into the faded face; the sleeping spirit sprang into vivacity, life was keen again, and all the world shone round her with an aspect strangely beautiful and new. The simple touch, prompted by faith, saved her wholly and saved her at once, as one look at the serpent of brass uplifted in the wilderness made the dying Israelite live.

So instantaneous and so complete is the pardon that follows faith. Between the act of that faith and the grant of that pardon there is not an intervening moment. Straightway he who trusts Christ crosses the line between the state of the lost and the state of the saved. It is not asserted that the *health* of the soul, by which we mean its sanctification, will be perfect all at once. Potentially, indeed, when a man believes he is "made whole from that hour," but actually, and as a matter of fact, the healing work of the Spirit is to go on by degrees, until, on his dying day, like dying Richard Baxter, he can say, "almost well!" But although he does not enjoy all at once, in all their completeness and amplitude, all the blessings of salvation, all at once he receives the germ of them all, all at

once he is on the way to them all, all at once he is truly saved. The case has its analogies in other things. To enter the high road to a distant city, and to be in that road as completely as you ever can be, may be the event of a moment; to reach the city may be a work of hours. To become legally entitled to a tract of forest-land, as much entitled as the law can make you, may be the act of a moment; to clear that land and bring it under cultivation may be the work of years. To begin the study of a science may be the act of a moment, to master that study may be the work of a life. Soon as a man believes he is enrolled as a pilgrim to the celestial city, he receives a title to the Christian heritage, and he becomes a student in Christ's school. His acceptance with God is as complete in that initial moment as it will be through all the days of heaven. The dying thief was as perfectly accepted when he cried, "Lord, remember me," as the dying Apostle was when he cried, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."

II. Let us enquire, WHY DID THE SAVIOUR ASK THE QUESTION, "WHO TOUCHED ME?" This excited the wonder of the disciples, and led their

spokesman to say, "Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?"

1. *Not from ignorance.* Questions on our part are understood to spring from ignorance, and are instruments employed to elicit information. Rationalizing writers on the life of Christ would fain persuade us that question on His part had a similar source and a similar design. Can we accept this theory? When He said, "Children, have ye any meat?" did He not know? When He made the enquiry, "Whom do men say that I am?" had He not heard? When He addressed to Peter the searching sentence, "Lovest thou me?" was the disciple wrong in the response, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee"? and when He asked, "Who touched me?" was the woman a stranger?

Not so. Those eyes of His could fill with tears and close in death; but out of them looked the awful Spirit that reads all secrets and strikes through the shades of night. He knew that hidden one; He had given her by His grace her first right impulse, had seen her while she was yet a great way off, had watched all the steps of her soul's pilgrimage until she had come to touch His garment, and bear away His blessing. Omniscience

asked the first question ever heard on earth,* and unless we have misread the Scriptures, and have hitherto been trusting the wrong person for our Saviour, it was Omniscience that asked the question, "Who touched me?"

2. *Not from exhaustion.* When prophets and apostles wrought miracles of healing, it was by a power foreign to themselves, which they had to invoke by prayer. When Christ wrought them, it was from His own indwelling power. There had been a sudden forthgoing of such power in this particular instance. Did He miss it? Was He weaker for it? Did He feel spent, as we feel spent after giving out, in some great effort, more nervous electricity than our life can spare? When that "virtue" was taken was there less virtue left? Did He therefore say, "Who touched me?" "We have not so learned Christ." Take one drop from the sea, take one grain from the shore, take one crystal from the sheet of winter snow, and there will be so much the less; but take eternal life from Christ, and He will still have eternal life to give. No gifts can impoverish a Divine giver; "No beams of beneficence poured from the everlasting Sun can diminish His power to shine." Jesus is "the Life" by whom all other beings live—"All

* Gen. iii. 9: "Where art thou?"

things are made by Him." Were fresh worlds of beauty and bounty to spring in infinite millions from His munificent hand, His wealth would be still the same ; were all sinful spirits to draw healing virtue from the fountain of His grace, that fountain would still be full.

"Enough for each, enough for all, enough for evermore."

3. *Not from displeasure.* If in some street of old Jerusalem, where walked priests in their sacred vestments, and scribes in their phylacteried robes, a person polluted in the eye of the law had gone up to one of those holy men, and said, "Rabbi, may I touch the hem of your garment?" imagine, if you can, the start back, the look of amazement, with which such impertinence would have been greeted, and the profusion of ceremonial waters that would have been called for to wash away the stain, if the hateful hand had not been waved off in time to avoid infection. But in village streets, where Jesus was expected, the sick were placed in long ranks of beds and litters, that they might catch from Him some comforting notice as He passed along, and touch the hem of His garment as it floated within their reach, for they knew that He delighted in mercy.* Sufferers whom others

Matt. xiv. 34; Mark vi. 55, 56.

repelled, He invited. The lowly, the lost, the shunned, the shelterless; sinners of the meanest class and the deepest dye, waifs of the world, outcasts from the temple, beings seldom seen by daylight, wanderers "who remembered home only as Eve remembered Eden,"—all might run to Him for sanctuary, and be sure to find a friend waiting to pardon their sins, absorb their sorrows, and win their hearts by love.

It was not, therefore, from any of these motives that Christ asked the question. We must account for it on some other principle. Remember that many of His most vital instructions were given in the form of questions, and that to this form they owe much of their impressiveness. A question has the force of a direct appeal; a question stimulates the sleeping faculties; a question restricts attention to the subject in question; a question heightens the glory of a coming disclosure; a question calls for a reply. Thus manifold seems to have been the design of the question, "Who touched me?"

1. It was intended to show that *He marks the difference between thronging and touching Him.**

* "Many press upon Christ, in outward ordinances, but believers touch Him; it is by faith that He is touched, so as to have virtue from Him."—Ambrose.

"How may I put up my hand into heaven, that I may take hold of Christ sitting there? Send up thy faith, and thou holdest Him."—Augustine.

As He went from place to place He was attended by an eager crowd. Eager hands were stretched out to reach Him; eager eyes were strained to see Him; eager voices appealed to Him for the solution of some difficulty or the cure of some disease, and every one in the jostling throng seemed eager to press nearer to the centre of interest. It was in the course of a walk through such a crowded path that Christ said, "Who touched me?" "Who touched Thee?" thought the disciples, "rather ask who touched Thee not!" Ah! but the Saviour ever discriminates between the mere accidental contact of those who rush with the multitude, and the conscious, dependent, voluntary touch of faith. While the crowd drove in dense, close pressure upon Him all round, a fainting woman alone intentionally placed her finger on the fringe of His raiment. Soft as the fall of a snowflake, light as the wafture of an insect's wing, that motion might have been, but it was instantly detected. As if the touched thread had been a sympathetic nerve along which the feelings of the patient passed, and by which they lightened mysteriously up to the "great sensorium of the universe," that touch, that light, quivering, electric touch was at once discriminated from all the other touches, and to that single touch, as differing in

its nature from all other contact felt that day, Christ is calling our attention now. It is a perpetual sign, a lesson of undying solemnity. It teaches us that we may throng round Christ without touching Him. Respect for religion as a social necessity, sentimental delight in its poetry, taste for theological research, interest in some particular preacher, pleasure felt in going with the multitude, mechanical habit, conscientious effort, intellectual preference,—these motives, or others like these, may make you "press to hear the word of God." It is well to frequent the place where prayer is wont to be made, it is well to wait at the wayside by which Jesus is accustomed to pass, it is well to respond even outwardly to the call of His gospel; but have you put forth the finger of faith to touch Him? You press near to Him it is true, so did His crucifiers. He takes no notice of *that* pressure. Many at the last assize will say to Him, "Thou hast taught in our streets; we crowded to hear Thee, we wept at the pictures of Thy passion, and chanted the chorus of Thy praise;" to whom He will answer, "Depart from me, for I know you not, whence ye are." He takes no notice of that pressure. There is no blessing on it, there is no value in it, there is no Divine virtue drawn forth by it. He only asks, "Who *touched* me?" He takes no

notice of that pressure, but the faintest touch of the weakest faith thrills to His throne. Burdened spirit, your faith has just reached Him, and He feels you leaning on His heart to-day as freshly as He felt the strain of those who cast themselves upon Him in the days when He was visibly here.

2. *It was to enlighten and invigorate the faith of her who touched Him.* She had do doubt of His ability to bless, no fear that He could be touched in vain : but though her trust in His power was mature, her trust in His love was defective, or why did she go behind Him to touch His garment, rather than before Him to ask His mercy? Why shrink from the sunshine, and tremble in the shadow? Poor, nervous trembler, she was afraid of a repulse. Knowing her unworthiness, she would not have been surprised if on a more direct application He had said, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" Weak and half-superstitious as was her faith, it drew from Him the blessing wanted. If you have but a little faith, go to Him with that little. Only a little faith will link weakness with almightiness. Wisely does Bunyan include in his register of pilgrims one whose name was Little Faith. But though a little faith will save the sinner, it will not satisfy the Saviour. Would you be content if your friend only trusted your power,

but half-doubted your love? Would it not grieve a father's heart to know that his child only trusted him a little? There is no friend so sensitive as Jesus, no heart is so full of feeling as the heart of God. When the Divine Healer summoned back the woman, with the question, "Who touched me?" we detect in His appeal a reproachful, pathetic tone, and He seemed to say to her, within hearing of all souls, "Look into my face, thoroughly confide in me. Trust *me* as well as my power, trust my heart as well as my hand."

3. *It was intended to be a method of asserting His right to be glorified for what He has done.* Conscience may be telling you that in your own life there is a repetition of the conduct that called forth this question of our Lord. You have been saved, but are trying to keep your salvation a secret. Against all the instincts of your new nature, you wish to shut up the fire that is burning in your spirit, to seal your lips in silence, and hush your love to secrecy. Let this question arrest you. Come back, come back! why are you going away? Christ has done His part, why will you not do yours? You owe your soul to Christ, why not say so? You have not been ashamed to accept the great obligation, why be ashamed to own it? It is a mean thing to steal a mercy. It

is unworthy of your manhood to take a benefit, and not to give the benefactor glory. It is like a work of darkness to come up unperceived, to seize the coveted boon, and then to try unperceived to glide away. At least, be as honourable in your transactions with God, as you are in your transactions with man. Do you plead great sensibility as your reason for not confessing Christ? Then let a man plead his exquisite refinement of feeling as a reason for not obeying the law, for not paying a debt, for not owning a friend, for not openly thanking the stranger who at the risk of life has snatched him from the flood or the flame. Do you plead that so long as "your life is in the right," there is no harm in withholding an avowal of your faith? Then there is no harm in a course that may naturally tempt some ignorant neighbour to withhold from Christ the credit of your cure; to ascribe it to some other physician, perhaps to fancy it wrought by yourself, and to say, "See, there is an unquestionably good man who does not feel bound to own Christ as his Saviour: since he has been saved without Christ, why may not I be? since he makes no profession, why need I?" Do you feel inclined to assume airs of superiority for making no profession of religion, and to cast slight on those who do make it? Do you dimly think that your

religion is somehow truer, deeper, more conscientious, less vulgar, than theirs, because, as you say, you make no noise about it, but keep it entirely to yourself? Then you are in error as to the nature of religion. From its very nature it will be manifest just in proportion as it is deep and strong. It is light, and light must shine. It is love, and love will stand up for a friend in the face of every foe; it is obedience, and when that heavenly Friend says, "Confess me before men," it will not refuse to obey Him. The greatest of all saints, according to a popular estimate, are secret saints. How so? Are the greatest of all scholars secret scholars, so secret that their learning is not suspected by mortal men? Are the greatest of all soldiers secret soldiers, who from prudential motives never appear on the field? Are the greatest of all lights secret lights,—invisible from their very intensity? God's battles will never be fought, nor His work done, nor His name spread in the world by a race of secret disciples. Not by doctrines of reserve, not by habits of non-profession, can we glorify our Father, or serve our generation. Be ashamed of your shame, away with all morbid shyness, all self-deceiving sophistries of pride; and if you have been healed by Christ, for Christ's sake, for man's sake, for your own sake, make your grateful ac-

knowledgments of salvation, and thus proclaim the honours of your Saviour. Let Christ's challenge surprise you from your imaginary hiding-place, let it have an effect in your life answering to that which is recorded in the story: "And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately."

4. Christ asked this question that the interview with the woman, to which it led, *might issue in the bestowment of His benediction.* She came "trembling at His word; for though cured, she was not yet calmed, because, though she had exercised faith, she had not yet professed it. Faith gained the cure, profession of faith was to gain the peace. She knew that it was not right to carry off the blessing in a dark, furtive, underhand way. She was not satisfied with herself; her heart was not at rest, her conscience made her tremble even at the loving Saviour's voice. But when she had acknowledged the secret mercy in open praise, He said unto her, "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath saved thee: *go in peace.*"

He had withheld this peace until now, because until now she had not done His will; He had with-

held it until now, because until now she had not exercised full faith in Him. In the act of professing her faith, her faith was strengthened. It is reasonable to suppose that it rose at once to a higher object than it before aimed at, and trusted Him henceforth not only as the Saviour of the body, but the Saviour of the soul. She was, therefore, prepared to receive His peace, and He granted it. By a similar path is He leading us, and as the result of a similar process will He shed upon us His richest benediction. Fully trust, then openly confess Him, and He will say, "Go in peace." In every great crisis of life, and after every special interview, He will repeat His benison, "Go in peace." When the storm of life is loudest, and the strife of the world rages most fiercely around us, our souls with silent fulness of delight will thrill to His words, "Go in peace." Even when we have reached the verge of this familiar stage of being, and are about to go into the world unknown, we still shall feel Him near, and hear Him say, "Go in peace." "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but his kindness shall not depart from us, neither shall the covenant of his peace be removed."

THE MASTER OF LIFE.

IX.

"Trouble not the Master."—LUKE viii. 49.

The Master of Life.

WHEN the title which is here translated "Master" was in common use, it meant the master of a school. Though it had virtual reference to ruling as well as teaching functions, the authority it recognized was only that which belongs to a teacher. We have already thought over the last of those functions as exercised by Christ; we are, therefore, justified in restricting our present considerations to the other element of meaning that belongs to the word,—the idea of rule.

Many are called masters, but "One is our Master, who is in heaven." The many are but the symbols of the One. Using the word in its English sense, every man is more or less, in relation to one thing or another, a master; but in Christ alone does the term find its full and perfect realization. According to His supreme nature, and by virtue of His

creative right, He is the Grand Master, presiding over this universe of various and glorious existence; all space teems with the tokens of His presence, all time with the indications of His power; every atom is under His law, and, in holy love or guilty fear, every soul will one day confess His sovereignty. "For all things were created by him and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."* Besides these original claims, He is entitled to Mastership in the case of Christians, by the new and tender claims that spring out of His atoning sacrifice; and all renewed hearts melt to the force of the appeal, "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are God's."†

The title itself seems to ask for no further consideration or enforcement. We do not so much need assurance of what the word "Master" means, as refreshed knowledge of the Being to whom it supremely belongs. We are not likely to misunderstand *that;* but there may be danger lest we should misunderstand *Him*. Sometimes the thought of His greatness chills the sense of His love, and the misgivings engendered by defective knowledge or faith abridge our joy from advantages that arise

* Col. i. 16, 17. † 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

out of our mutual relationship. We dare not indulge in the sacred freedom to which we are invited, and when we are about to ask Him for some favour, or when, having already done so, that which we have asked for is not immediately granted, a voice within, if not a voice without, will often say, "Trouble not the Master." It may, therefore, be profitable to us if, to correct our unworthy thoughts of Him, we read these words as illustrated, first, by the narrative to which they belong, and next, by the history of our own experience.

I. VIEW THESE WORDS AS ILLUSTRATED BY THE NARRATIVE TO WHICH THEY BELONG.

Few stories, even in the pages of the great Biography, so thrill us with the freshness of their living charm, and the fulness of their human interest, as this. The simple pathos of its very opening sentence melts its way into the soul of every one who knows what it is to love a child, or what it is to lose one. Not only must every true father feel it, but it must be felt by every true man. "Jairus had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a-dying." When the stern prophet sought to startle David to a sense of the enormous wrong that he had done to Uriah, he began by saying, "The poor man had nothing, save one little ewe-lamb, which he had bought,

and nourished up; and it grew up together with him, and with his children: it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter."* It seemed as if he could find no word like this to suggest at a stroke that which a manly nature guards most sacredly, and looks upon with most fearful tenderness. He could not go beyond it. Language was exhausted when that was spoken, and inspiration itself could say no more.

Jairus had "one only daughter." The tender grace of his daily life, the sunshine, the beauty, the music of his home. But it was against the law for all this happiness to last for ever. In this world our objects of delight are so many possibilities of pain; we hold them uncertainly; on some of them we read the signs that prophesy their early withdrawment, and when they go we find that our joy in their possession was only the measure of our grief at their loss. Sooner or later great love must know great sorrow, and, however calm, still, or passionately happy our homes may be now, they are open to the intrusion of a visitor, whose shadow will blot out for the moment all bright memories, and make us ready to say, in our haste,—

* 2 Sam. xii. 3.

"There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there ;
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
But has one vacant chair.
The air is filled with farewells to the dying
And mournings for the dead ;
The heart of Rachel, for her children crying,
Will not be comforted."

One day Death knocked at the door of Jairus. Before the inmates knew it he had entered. With velvet footfall, with fatal gentleness, and with silent, stealthy, spectral fingers, he approached to touch the child,—to hush that ring of light laughter, to still the airy foot, and to quench the brightness of that radiant eye. They could not believe it. Hour after hour, hoping against hope, they watched and listened with suspended soul for the symptoms of some happy change, until the truth forced itself upon them, —that "she lay a-dying." Just then, in the despairing pause of anguish, when, to human eye, all was over, the Good Spirit brought Jesus to mind. It was fearfully late. Not another moment could be lost. Up sprang the frantic father, out he rushed, and away he ran, not conscious of touching the earth, not hearing the voices that accosted him, not seeing the road, nor the trees, nor the houses, nor the shimmer of the

distant sea, until far off down upon the sands, in the midst of a great congregation, he found the Prophet of Galilee; then he fell at His feet and poured forth a prayer such as could only burst from the lips of a loving father, pleading for the life of a dying child.

It is hard for a soul in agony to pray with patience, or to wait in hope while God delays to answer it. Out of the depths it will cry, "Make haste, O God, to deliver me, make haste to help me. . . . . I am poor and needy; make haste, unto me, O God; thou art my help and deliverer; O Lord, make no tarrying." Swifter than the sunbeam travels, the Comforter may sometimes come to us in such distress; at other times, for reasons unrevealed, He may try our faith to the uttermost by long delay. This was the trial of Jairus. Although the Master turned at once to go with him, He was long on the road, and there seemed to rise at every stage some new impediment. First, there was delay from the crowd, for "as he went the people thronged him"; next, there was delay through the working of a miracle—the miracle on the woman who touched the edge of His garment; then there was delay from the ensuing conversation. But let the sequel of the story encourage us to give to the

winds all our alarms on account of God's delays. He *may* delay to help us, but delay is not denial. He *may* delay, and yet—

"But wait the fittest time His mercy to display."

He *may* delay, but only that the spirit of prayer may gain impulse from resistance, and strength from disappointment. He *may* delay, but not from the causes that operate on us. Our delays are from infirmity; His, from perfection. We are in a hurry, for our time is short, our sun will soon go down, and the next events in a life like ours are hid in mystery; but, to borrow the simple speech of a village preacher, "The great Lord is never in a hurry; He has all to do, but He has time enough, for He inhabiteth eternity." He may delay revealing His mercy until in our extremity we are desperate: He did in this case. While the precious sands of time were dropping, while check after check and stoppage after stoppage were contributing to prolong delay, and the chafed and fretted father was saying to himself, "Jesus will be too late! He will be too late! my child must die!" the message came to him, which, though it might have fallen still and low upon his ear, shattered like the crash of a tempest on his soul—"Thy daughter is dead; *trouble not the Master.*" But

was it of no use to trouble the Master? Was this wise advice? Was it all just as he feared it would be? Was the little one beyond all help at last must her name be henceforth dropped from her father's prayers? and must he indeed cease pleading with the Master? Not so. The Master saw his white lip and working features, "Be not faithless," said He, "only believe,"* and went on His way until He reached the house. Then, intolerant as He is now of all unreality, and angry with all artificial shows of feeling, He put out the ceremonial mourners, drew nigh to the couch where the dead child was lying, and said, "*Talitha cumi*," "Come, my child!" Thus He called back the vanished life, bade the fallen lily lift its head, and light up into colour again; in one moment changing sorrow into joy, and the shadow of death into morning.

II. View those words AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE HISTORY OF OUR OWN EXPERIENCE. She, over whom such blinding tears were wept, is alive to day, and will never die again. Jairus has dwelt for long ages in heaven, and no words of discouragement stop him in his journeys there. But we are often checked as he was once, and the tempta-

* "When Jesus saw Jairus deadly astouned and amazed at this news, He comforted him, saying, 'Bee not afraid; only have thou a faithfull beliefe, and the girle shall be safe.'"—Udall.

tions that he fought with are repeated in the daily life of man below. The Master, though invisible, is still on earth, and still—

> "The sons of Adam in distress
> Fly to the shadow of His wings."

Every prayer must reach His ear before we can have the answer to it, for "through him we have access by one Spirit to the Father"; He is the Minister into whose hands we cast our cause, the great High Priest through whom we present every supplication. If we recognize the principle of mediation, and understand that we can only reach the Divinity through the crucified humanity, the sovereign through the sacrifice,—then, sometimes dropping the common formula, "to the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit," and feeling intuitively His presence at our side, we may make many a direct and particular appeal to them, as Paul used to do, as the dying Stephen did, and as was the privilege of the disciples in the days of the incarnation. Nothing, I think, so tends to make our lives sublime, and our prayers intensely truthful; nothing so tends to vitalize our thoughts of God, nothing so helps to bring out for us the full use and power of the fact that Christ is "the way to the Father," as the habit of speaking to

Christ as if we saw Him, the habit inspired by the perpetual remembrance of His presence, which, although silent and unseen, is the most real of all realities. The point I wish to come to is, that when on our own behalf, or on behalf of others, we are in the act of applying to Him for help, we are often assailed by the sentiment that brought Jairus to a stand. "Trouble not the Master," cries the specious philosopher. "Far away in the depths of the absolute, not to be reached by thoughts that relate themselves to human ideas of form, hidden amidst cold laws, enthroned in the tranquil glory of merciless perfections, shining on in insensate, unobservant greatness, He is too high to care for what may happen in this world of insects, or to trouble Himself with the vicissitudes of our mean affairs." "Trouble not the Master," cries the mocking secularist, or if you will you may. "Cry aloud, for he is God, either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened." "Trouble not the Master," cries the trivial worldling. "Be your own master, be practical, help yourself, take your affairs in your own hands, waste no time in these dreamy fervours and idle cries to vacancy." When there are no such speakers calling to you from the world without, there are traitors within the city of

"Mansoul" itself ready to speak in the same strain, and give the same advice. Unbelief says, "Trouble not the Master"; Pride says, "Trouble not the Master"; Despondency says, "Trouble not the Master"; Indolence says, "Trouble not the Master." In this argument I fight with no phantom, warn you against no strange or unlikely temptation. When at any time you say that it is of no use for you to pray; when you think that owing to some dire peculiarity in your own case, though prayer may avail for others it will not avail for you; when you imagine that the petitions you have to lay before the Sovereign involve things that may be too much for Him to grant, too great for Him to do, or too mean for Him to notice, the tempter who told you so only said in other words, "Trouble not the Master."

Test some of these objections, that you may be furnished with a reply when next they are presented.

1. "Trouble not the Master," *for there is no real power in prayer.* The mystery of prayer confounds you. However loving the Master's heart may be, however mighty His hand, it seems to you unlikely that He can be moved to give distinct and specific help of any kind, in consequence of such an appeal. It is hard to understand how so simple

an effort as the utterance of a desire can "move the hand that moves the universe"; that an effect so magnificent can come from a cause so mean. You have never consciously formed the opinion that prayer is useless, but a thought of this nature sometimes disturbs your peace, infects your intellectual convictions, and when you are kneeling before the throne of grace almost makes you speechless with despondency.

To banish this thought, you have only to believe the Scriptures. From first to last they are luminous with the revelation that God is the hearer of prayer. By stately argument, by thrilling verse, by precious promise, by practical teaching and historic proof, they show that prayer has power. Let their testimony be honestly accepted, and your reliance on the instrumentality of prayer will be definite and fixed as your trust in the evidence of your senses. You will say, "It has, and God has *determined* that it should have, a positive and an appreciable influence in directing the course of a human life. It is, and God has *purposed* that it should be, a link of connection between human mind and Divine mind, by which, through His infinite condescension, we may actually move His will. It is, and God has *decreed* that it should be, a power in the universe, as distinct, as real, as natural, and as

uniform, as the power of gravitation, of light, or of electricity. A man may *use* it as trustingly and as soberly as he would use either of these. It is as truly the dictate of good sense that a man should expect to achieve something by praying, as that he should expect to achieve something by a telescope, or the mariner's compass, or the electric telegraph."*

2. "Trouble not the Master," *for the help you ask is too great for Him to render.* The companions of the visible Christ might sometimes have had their minds crossed with a doubt like this, for their knowledge of His character was not yet critically perfect, their sense of His inward glory came but in brief and fitful flashes, and the presence of the familiar humanity tended to deaden their impressions of the Divinity that dwelt within. It would have been far from surprising if, even before the tidings came that the maiden was no more, one of them had tried to hush the impetuous prayers of Jairus, and had taken him aside to say in effect, "O my friend, spare the Master, or you will tire out His power, for He can bear no further strain upon it. Only last night, when, after a day spent in witnessing His amazing labours, we were conveying Him across the sea,

* Austin Phelps.

He dropped into the boat well-nigh dead with weariness, and would have slept all through the thunder of the terrific hurricane that has left its wrecks upon your strand, only, just as the vessel was going down, we woke Him, and then He put out power that stilled the storm; when we reached the shore He put out power again, and conquered the evil spirits haunting Gadara; and ever since we came back He has put out power in travelling, preaching, and performing mighty works, without a moment's pause. Even just now virtue has gone out of Him to heal that woman; but nearly all His strength is spent at last; only look at Him; see His bending form, His trembling steps, His dim and weary eye. Trouble not the Master, but rather let us lure Him if we can into some deep solitude, that there we may banish every footstep and silence every voice while the Man of sorrows sleeps."

For us, however, who live in a day when the revelation of the Master is complete, there can be no apology for such a doubt. For us to have even a vague and floating fear that from something in Him, or from something in ourselves, the help we wish for is too great for Him to render, seems to be almost impossible. Yet, I am persuaded, it often has a real existence, and a solid power, when

it has no defined expression. Even you who are no strangers to prayer, if you would but watch the workings of your hearts, might frequently detect it, and find that you pray with most confidence for those benefits which to human sight are most easy for the Master to bestow, and with most diffidence for those the bestowment of which would most obviously be an act of Almighty prerogative. You measure the Master's power by your own. You unconsciously apply to Him your own human standards of ease and difficulty. You practically forget His Divine Mastership. Henceforth practically remember it. When at the mercy-seat attempt great things, expect great things. Ask for royal gifts. Pray for spiritual miracles. Look for revivals that shall excel in glory all that earth has ever seen. Renew your intercessions for men whom you have judged to be hopeless, and for whom Christians have ceased to pray, as they have ceased to pray for human dust over which grass waves and "long shadows blow." Do you not promise this? Will you ever again dream that the gift you long for is too great for the Master to bestow? Will you any more permit this doubt to dictate limitations to your hope? Will you submit another time to be arrested in your journey of prayer when *that* cries "Trouble not the

Master"? "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?"

3. "Trouble not the Master," *for the help you ask for relates to matters too insignificant for His dignity to notice.* We are often greatly affected by things that seem to be too small for prayer. If we had to speak of some grand success, or some sublime calamity, if "a host were to encamp against us," if famine were to stare upon us, or if some massive obstacle were to rise like a mountain in our path, we should think those matters worthy of an errand to the throne; but "the trivial round, the common task," the vexations, the annoyances, and "the insect stings of life,"—we hardly like to trouble the Master with the story of these, or if we do, it seems to befit the solemnity of prayer to mention them, not in plain language, and by particular description, but only in the dialect of ceremony, and in some inferential way. But this our way is our folly. Duly consider what Chalmers calls "the power of the littles." Look at little things in their *combination.* "One single snowflake," it has been said, "is a little thing; but a whole day of snowflakes may block up the roadway, obliterate the land-

marks, gather on the mountains, descend like an avalanche into the plains, and thus overwhelm cottages in its fall." In like manner, one single care is a little thing; but a whole day of cares, a week of cares, a life of little cares,—we call that sum total a great thing. The least fact has infinite relations; and as the year is made up of moments, and the world of atoms, so is life of little things. Look at little things *separately*. Could each one be traced in its single influence along the line of its future history, the mind would faint at the thought of its amazing greatness. A little wheel in a vast machine may, if neglected, throw the results of that machine into destructive confusion. A little miscalculation in some process of high mathematical thought may issue in an enormous and damaging mistake. A little spark may fire a prairie; a little leak may sink a ship; a little seed may hold a future forest growth of good or evil. A dislodged stone in your pathway may seem to you to be a thing too trivial for notice, yet it may draw down the notice of an angel. That stone may cause a fall, the fall a fracture, and the fracture death; therefore it is written, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Some slight unchronicled inci-

dent in your experience may colour your life for eternity. Some noteless action may be the germ of a power that shall spread through all the earth, and fill all hell with heightened sorrow, or all heaven with praise. Apply these considerations to the subjects of prayer. While that poor widow is kneeling on a ragged strip of carpet in her garret, with her heart full to breaking because the barrel of meal is almost empty, the cruse of oil almost spent, and she has just been gathering "two sticks," meaning to light a fire, and dress what remains, that she and her child may eat of it and then die,* would you silence her? Would you say, "He to whom you speak about a little flour and a little fire is at this moment calling constellations into light, or bidding worlds to pass away. Trouble not the Master"? Do you think the high and lofty One will be regardless of that poor prayer? Not because He is unwilling to notice it, for His name is Love; not because He is unable, for it is only imperfection that can do but one thing at a time, and that is sometimes compelled to say to a suppliant, "I am doing a great work, and cannot come down; trouble me not now." No! while He rules in the armies of heaven He thinks of me; while He

* 1 Kings xvii. 8—16.

kindles a sun He shows the same perfection of thought for the meanest thing as for the most majestic; while He governs innumerable nations of spirits His attention is never distracted for a moment, even from the sparrow in its nest, or the spider on its line. He would not be the Infinite Master did He not watch with clearest notice and adorn with exactest care each thread of moss that streaks a stone, each flower that lifts its head in the spaces of the wilderness, the smallest insect that floats about it, and the smallest mote which that insect waves aside with its wing. He is Master of the universe because He is Master of all its particulars; His general providence involves His particular providence. Great things are but aggregates of little things, and He attends to the great by attending to the small.

Such convictions made Sir Fowell Buxton say, "I feel permitted to offer up my prayers for everything that concerns me, and I am inclined to imagine that there are no little things with God. His hand is as manifest in the feathers of a butterfly's wing, in the eye of an insect, in the folding and packing of a blossom, in the curious aqueducts by which a leaf is nourished, as in the creation of a world, and in the laws by which the planets move.

"I understand literally the injunction, 'In every-

thing make your requests known to God'; and I cannot but notice how amply these prayers have been met."

Silenced for ever be the spirit that would say, "Trouble not the Master," for the help you ask for relates to matters too insignificant for His dignity to notice. Only a little spirit can slight a little thing. Never let me trifle with trifles. Trifles educate me, trifles wake my temper, trifles colour my views of truth, trifles influence my thoughts of God, trifles affect my power of prayer, trifles combined make the very sublimities of life. I will take to the Master these small perplexities, these little interests, these obscure, indefinite cares that weigh my spirit down, but which are too little to excite the sympathy of man, for they will not be little in the sight of God. It is His glory to notice things like these; and by His care for the little He proclaims His majesty, and maintains His throne.

4. "Trouble not the Master," for you have *no assurance of His love* sufficient to warrant expectation of successful prayer. We must be sure of His love before we are sure of His readiness to render help in every time of need. Many thoughts break in upon us that tend to disturb this assurance. There is the thought of our natural insignificance:

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" There is the thought of our spiritual unloveliness. Still foul from the mire of sin, out of which His hand has snatched my soul; weak, repulsive, infected thing as I am; how can God love me? We know that it is the manner of man to help the sufferer who is interesting, and to shun him who is commonplace; to help him who comes but rarely, and to say to him who comes repeatedly, "You have been before, you are always coming, and by your continual coming you weary me"; to help him whom we can help without much waste of strength or strain of resolution; and in a different case, to reply in the spirit of the man in the parable, whose friend asked at midnight for the loan of three loaves, "Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed, I cannot rise and give thee"; to help him who has claims upon us, and to say of him who has been our enemy, "Why should we help that man?"

This may be after the manner of man, but it is not after the manner of God. In the slumber of our better judgment, and in forgetfulness of higher teaching, we often take from fallen human nature

our types of the Divine; and this principle may lead us to fancy that because man is troubled by the reiterations of importunity, God will be. But "we will remember His love." We know from human history and personal consciousness something of what love can do—how far it will travel, how low it will stoop, how long it will bear; what "beautiful disdain" it pours on the thought that it is taking trouble. Is it a trouble to a mother to nurse her infant? Is it a trouble to a father to provide for his family? When you have received some signal service from a friend, and you thank him, does he not say "No trouble!" All this is love within our knowledge, but the love of Christ is beyond it. We can never perfectly know what love is till we know Christ. "Love,—Jesus,—the same thing," so said the dying Sir James Mackintosh, and the sentiment has your endorsement. Jesus is never too weary to hear you pray. By an insanely sensitive temper, by petty, anxious, restless, "frictional activity" of thought; by weak, fatiguing talk, monotonous and dismal as the drip of "water that wears away the stones," many an afflicted mortal gradually wears out even the tenderest and most patient of his friends, and compels that friend to recoil from the "trouble" of a frequent interview. But in

deep, sweet, ineffable tenderness, "the Master" will sit for long hours by that poor complainer, listening to all the minute and fond particularity of detail with which he tells his story, and gradually distilling into his mind his own ennobling Spirit, while He grants "mercy and grace to help in time of need."

5. "Trouble not the Master," *for this is not the right time* for your supplication. More than a century ago, a hundred and forty-six Englishmen, captives at Calcutta, were, by order of the native prince who had them in captivity, driven by tremendous pressure into a cell which in dimensions was but a cube of eighteen feet, with only two narrow grated apertures through which the prisoners could breathe. It was hard to breathe the burning air without, but who can think of the suffocating agony within? The gasping cries of the perishing men were such as to prevail on one of the sentinels to go and implore relief of the Suba. But he soon returned, saying the Suba was asleep, and that it was on pain of death that any one dared to waken him before a certain time. "Trouble not the master; this is not his time for granting audience!" When the prescribed moment had arrived merciful Death had done his work, and it was too late for help from man. It is never too early, never too late, for earnest cries

to reach Thee, O Jesus; Thou despisest not Thy prisoners. We cannot by our continual coming weary Thee; whenever faith comes to Thee, "it is an accepted time and a day of salvation."*

"Trouble not the Master!" The first design of this advice was to interrupt an errand of intercessory love. The first design of the Saviour's comment on it was to make the intercessor persevere. The first design of the whole story, and the grand reason of its insertion amongst the memoranda of the Evangelists, was to encourage intercession. Intercession, when it rises to the New Testament ideal, is the highest, most generous, and most Christ-like mode of prayer. We see in it the tenderest form of emotion, the

* "Yea, Thou art good, and hast of mercye store;
Thou art not plast to see a sinner fall;
Thou hearkenest first, before we come to call;
Thine eares are set wyde open evermore:
Before we knocke Thou comest to the doore:
Thou art more preste to heare a sinner crie
Than He is quicke to clymbe to Thee on hye.

I looke for Thee, my louelye Lorde, therefore;
For Thee I wayte, for Thee I tarrye styll:
Mine eies doe long to gaze on Thee my fyll;
For Thee I watche for Thee I prie and pore:
My soule for Thee attendeth evermore;
My soule doth thirste to take of Thee a tast;
My soule desires with Thee for to be plast;
And to Thy worde, which can no man decieue,—
Myne only trust
My love and lust,
In confidence continuallye shall cleave."—*De Profundis.*
GEORGE GASCIONGE.

most engaging act of humanity, the most secret, yet, perhaps, the most mighty instrument of influence that man can use in the service of his fellow-men. When you can do nothing else, you can pray. When a man is shut up in a chamber of sorrow too sacred for human intrusion, how can you comfort him? Turn all your sympathy into prayer; for in answer to such secret intercessions many a mourner's heart has been filled with the joy of God. When some one whom you most earnestly care for is in extreme spiritual peril, when you long to part him from an evil companion, or to convince him of a baleful error, or to save him from a master vice, yet feel that the habits and associations of his life have placed him as much beyond the reach of your ordinary influence as if he dwelt in another planet, how can you reach him? Pray! for he is not beyond the reach of your prayers, and perhaps your appeal to the "Cause of causes" on his behalf may be the first fact in a long train of instrumentalities that will issue in the renovation of his soul. When the sound made by the dash of the sleet on the casement, and the boom of the tempest on the sea, seem to make the fireside silence more intense, and the fireside peace more exquisite, but at the same time fills some night-watcher's heart with

an agony of fear for the fate of those unspeakably dear to her, who are out amongst the billows, how can she help them? Let her but pray, and "her feeble cry may overrule the elemental war, and hush into silence the wild frenzy of the winds and the waves, and evoke the gentler breezes from the cave of their slumbers, and waft the vessel of her dearest hopes, and which holds the first and fondest of her earthly treasures, to its desired haven."* There may be no change in the known sequences of nature, but there may be a change in that higher part of the chain which is beyond our view. The high and lofty One who presides over the endless succession of causes, may "put forth an overruling influence which shall tell and propagate downwards, so as to answer prayer, without breaking the visible uniformity of nature." Believing, as we do, that prayer is one of the great powers of the universe; that it enters into the very mechanism of the Divine plans, and that He who has decreed certain ends has also decreed that prayer shall be amongst the means for working out the accomplishment of those ends; we are not permitted to doubt that much material good, and the richest gifts of spiritual blessing, may often come to us through the medium of intercession.

* Dr. Chalmers on the Efficacy of Prayer, and the Uniformity of Nature.

Unlike other means of mutual help, this is a power within the reach of all Christ's disciples. Only the rich can help by wealth, only the wise by counsel, only the strong by strength, only the old by old experience; but all can help by prayer. Use to the utmost the instrument with which you are entrusted. "Fear not, believe only. Let neither the littleness of the interests that call forth your prayers, nor their greatness, nor their unworthiness, nor any other discouraging consideration make you afraid to trouble the Master. Never go to His door with a timid and hesitating knock. Never regard your prayer in the light of a mere experiment, which, even if it will do no good, will do no harm. In the spirit of trust, of hope, of bright and cordial joy, be much in intercession; intercede for your children and for all the sharers of your home; intercede for your friends; intercede for the unconverted, and despair of no man; intercede for ministers and evangelists; intercede for the kingdom of Christ; be deaf to every voice that says, "Trouble not the Master," and listen to the voice from heaven that is for ever saying, "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, *give him no rest*, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in all the earth."

THE WINGS OF THE SHEKINAH.

X.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"—MATT. xxiii. 37.

"Hid under the wings of the shekinah of his glory."—Targum on Ruth ii. 12.

The Wings of the Shekinah.

THESE words were spoken by the Lord Jesus when He was standing on the Temple pavement for the last time. They belong to the last sentence of the last appeal He ever addressed to the people of Jerusalem. When the mournful music of this sentence had died away, and the speaker had vanished, "Ichabod" might have been written over their gates, for the "glory had departed"; the night of death had swept over them; "*their* house," no longer God's house, was "left unto them desolate"; though still rich with typical sculpture, thronged with festive multitudes, and fragrant with incense, it was a Temple no more, for God was gone.

Christ is set forth under the symbol of A SHELTER. This is the central thought of the

text, and we are now summoned with all humility and reverence to study it.

I. The first thing suggested by this symbol is the idea of DANGER. Not only or chiefly were the Jews warned of danger from the stroke of the Roman eagle, which was about to rend them as its prey. Great as was the political calamity that menaced them, their greatest danger was spiritual; the danger shared by all, in every age, who have broken the law, but have not accepted the Saviour. Infraction of law must be followed by infliction of penalty. This is a principle to which common sense subscribes. It is older than historical Christianity. Before we open the Bible, we learn it from the grand and tranquil regularities of nature. There is a law in the fire; break it, and you will be burned. There is a law in the water; break it, and you will be drowned. There is a law in mechanical force; break it, and you will be crushed. There are laws for souls as well as for bodies; these laws are all wrapped up in one: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." Let the soul break it, and the soul will die. The full penalty does not follow close upon the transgression, but it is inevitable; it may descend at any moment; and already,

perhaps, in the case of some of you, it is far on its way. There is a world of significance in the solemn poetry of inspiration, which represents the people who have broken law as "sitting in darkness and the shadow of death." *The shadow of death.* Near, very near, to the spot where the shadow is the substance must be. As the lamb under the shadow of the lion; as the dove under the shadow of the eagle; as the fugitive under the shadow of the falling sword, so may a spirit be under the shadow of death. Yet while men allow this in theory they deny it in practice. They naturally run from any other evil; they naturally feel no alarm at this, the greatest of all.

In all other life there is a sure instinct which gives notice of approaching danger, and prompts the flight to safety. The horse will start and plunge with terror at the stealthy step or quivering glide of something in the underwood which has escaped his rider's notice. Why? There is danger. The lark will sometimes suddenly hush its carol and drop like a dead thing to the earth. Why? Look up into the vault of light, and presently you trace a vibrating speck in the clear glory—a bird of prey hangs poised aloft over the feathery songster that hides and trembles in the grass. There is danger. Let but a shadow shake across

the pool, and its tiny tenants dart about like gold and silver flashes. There is danger. But though voice after voice ring out awakening peals of warning, and solemn calls to penitence; though witness after witness may start forth to notify to man that there is danger near him; sin has so benumbed the nerve that should make him conscious of it that no alarm is felt, and the only stir that follows is like the spasmodic motion of a person starting in his sleep, but not awaking out of it. Still we must cry aloud, and not spare, however much the world may scorn us for what it calls our narrow notions, or condemn us for our importunity. When man is in danger, and in danger from the worst evil that can light upon him, surely a knowledge of the fact is his first necessity; and that wisdom is the wildest folly, that refinement is cruel as the grave, which would conceal the terrible possibilities of the future, would sink every attribute of God in the single conception of mercy, and would ruin the soul to spare the sensibilities. "Son of man," said the voice to the prophet, "I have set thee as a watchman to the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word of My mouth, and warn them from Me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost

not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand." I stand here, therefore, in obedience to the heavenly charge, to wake you from the trance of fatal contentment and the slumbers of deceptive repose, and to tell you in downright simplicity that there is danger at hand. It is implied in this very image, though at first sight it seems only to suggest ideas of beautiful tenderness and peace. There would have been no ark if there had been no flood; there would have been no refuge if there had been no foe; no "buckler" would have been wanted if there had been no blow to parry; no place for this figure would have been found in the appeals of Christ if there had been no danger.

II. The symbol of a shelter is so presented as to set forth THE GLORY of Him who is thus revealed. Who speaks the words that thus wake up all our faculties into a state of activity and excitement? Who is it that says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not?" Who is this, declaring Himself, in serene singleness, able to be the shelter of a *nation*, the shelter of the *spirits* of a nation, the shelter of

these spirits through the long roll of successive *ages?* What is the name of the Being who could have extended such a sheltering wing as would have been required to protect from danger so terrific, on a scale so subline? Look round for the speaker. You see nothing startling or wonderful. No angelic form stands before you—"His countenance like lightning, and his raiment white as snow." You see but a man like yourselves; you meet but the glance of a human eye; you hear but a voice, muffled and interrupted by the sighs and sobs that shiver from a human heart. The truth is, you see only a veil;* but there is an unseen glory beyond it. No mere man could utter such words of majestic independence, or speak in such conscious possession of unsearchable riches, or give in a moment such a revelation of unfathomable love. You find the explanation of the secret in the language which continues and completes the text. "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, Ye shall not see *Me* henceforth until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The house is the Temple; then He who has offered the great shelter is—

* "Δια του καταπετασματος, τουτεστι της σαρκος αὐτου." — Heb x. 20.

"Our living Dread, who dwelt
In Silo, His bright sanctuary;"

tor in such a connection only, the withdrawal of the *Master* of the house can make the house desolate; only the withdrawal of the *glory* from the Temple can make the Temple dark. Christ was, therefore, the Master and glory of the Temple.

In the olden time the presence of God in the Temple was typified by the mystic, lonely light that waved over the mercy-seat. When that fire had faded into darkness, in token of the fact that in consequence of the sins of the people God had withheld the light of His favour from their spirits; and when the erection of a new Temple was anticipated, a prophet said, "The glory of the latter house shall be greater than the glory of the former." This "latter house" was now erected, but where was the predicted glory? The common eye could see none; but Christ stood there, and, to the purified eye of faith, the spot on which He stood was consecrated ground; heaven poured its brightness there, and though through the raiment of Jesus flowed no light of strange and wondrous beauty; though no halo of celestial radiance ringed His brow, He was the true glory of the Temple. This gave Him authority to say, "There standeth one among you greater than the temple." As the

author is greater than the book; as the worker is greater than the work; as the man is greater than the house he dwells in; as the Creator is greater than the creation, so Christ was greater than the Temple.

To be greater than the Temple was to be greater than anything of which the Temple was the scene. Greater than the Mosaic economy; greater than the priests; greater than the sacrifices; greater than revelation. And Christ was all this; at His departure the place was made desolate; and at His return every harp shall be taken from the willows, and the sounds of lamentation shall be changed into the shout of welcome and the flow of festival delight. This is the Agent who breathes the love and offers the refuge here proclaimed. We can understand it now. It was customary for the Jews to say of a proselyte, "He has taken shelter under the wings of the Shekinah." We now see that to take shelter under the wings of the Shekinah is to take shelter under the wings of Christ; and that Christ, therefore, is God. It is *Divine* protection that is offered you. The overshadowing wing of Omnipotence is spread for your defence. All the perfections of the sovereign Spirit combine to make the living shield which beats back the destroying stroke, and which is broad enough

to canopy a fugitive world. To fly to Christ is "to dwell in the secret place of the Most High, to abide under the shadow of the Almighty"; you may say of Him, "He is my refuge and my fortress. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust."

III. This symbol of a shelter illustrates in the highest degree the CONDESCENDING TENDERNESS of Christ.

It does so by its homely simplicity, as well as by its ineffable pathos. You have already seen that Christ was the crowning glory of the temple, and the climax of all that the Temple typified. When He becomes a shelter to fugitive spirits, what metaphor does He employ to set that fact in light? We might have expected Him to search the worlds of imagination, the heights and depths of truth and beauty, heaven and earth; to have made the sun, the moon, and the stars, and all that was brilliant and wonderful in life, contribute to furnish an emblem that should fill us with confidence, yet strike us with awe, and be consistent with "the throne and equipage of His almightiness." Such symbols have appeared in the early imageries of this Holy Book. When, for instance, David in one of the battle-songs of his spirit speaks of fleeing to the Divine shelter, he describes it as God's

"pavilion," a word-picture which instantly sets before our minds with dazzling distinctness the royal tent planted in the centre of the tented field, the canopy round which all the other tents are pitched, and which all the national battalions guard; so that to reach the refugee who hides there, a way must be forced through the army. Thus we are taught that to reach the fugitive who hides in the Saviour, the foe must strike his path through the ranks of angels, through all the armies of the universe, through all the mighty aggregate of created power and impetus of resisting force,—right to the very heart of creation. This image is as true as it is grand, but Christ does not adopt it. When He would show the shelter that He has provided for souls, He says, "I would have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings."* The great ones of the earth would not

* Mr. Arnot, speaking of the Parable of the Virgins, says: "The Lord's great parable, like the Lord's great Apostle, is 'weak and contemptible' in its bodily presence; but the letters in which it writes its meaning are like his, 'weighty and powerful!' A few country girls arriving too late for a marriage, and being, therefore, excluded from the festival, is not in itself a great event; but I know not any words in human language that teach a more piercing lesson than the conclusion of the similitude. . . This conception, like that of the hen gathering her chickens under her wings, seems so common and so commonplace, that we would not have ventured in dignified discourse to employ it: in the hands of Jesus the similitude becomes at once tender and terrible in the highest degree. At His word the world sprang from nothing; we need not be surprised to find that under His touch small things become great."—THE PARABLES OF OUR LORD, p. 287

nave described their offers of protection in terms like these, lest they should incur ridicule when they would summon reverence. The figure would have been thought beneath the dignity of eloquence or literature. Even expositors of Christ's truth sometimes glance at it with half-averted eye, touch it lightly, and pass on, as if they felt it to be mysteriously incongruous and low. Yet never was an image so homely invested with grace so exquisite and grandeur so sublime. It answers to perfection all the ends of figurative speech. It simplifies the truth that it conveys, and makes the tender thought shoot forth in living, lighted beauty. Wise or unwise, rich or poor, old or young, all can see its meaning and feel its fascinating kindness. The little child can understand it; the old man thrills to its tender touches. See the fledglings dart in and out beneath the mother's broad wing; the little, panting, fluttering, film-like things, creeping up to nestle in the very love of her who watches them, whose form seems to expand with delight as they come, and whose feathers give them rest, protection, cherishing warmth; all that their nature teaches them to ask for, or fits them to enjoy. If they do wander beyond the reach of her peculiar call, and the storm should rush or the foe should strike,

what can they do but die? but under her care they are sheltered from every danger that can assail them in their own little range of life.

Jesus, the Lord of the Temple and the Light of the Mercy-seat; Jesus, the thrice holy One, before whom the spirits of the glorified rejoice; Jesus, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God; Jesus, who rolls the stars along, whose hand holds the winds, who shoots the white waterfall, who builds up the mountain range, and flings forth in their stormy might the wild waves of the sea; Jesus, that not an infant might miss His meaning, and that not a solitary, bewildered spirit should be lost through failing to see the welcome He might meet with, and the shelter He might find in saving love, has left on record the revelation of His heart that is poured forth in this homely, familiar, most touching appeal to the despisers of His grace: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" *

* "His plumes shall make a downie bed,
Where thou shalt rest; He shall display
His wings of truth over thy head,
Which, like a shield, shall drive away
The feares of night, the darts of day." THOMAS CARY.

IV. This symbol of Christ is so set forth as to suggest the idea of a shelter afforded by one WHO INTERPOSES HIS OWN LIFE BETWEEN US AND DANGER.

A shelter of some kind or other is the favourite symbol employed by the bards of the Bible to show the nature of the interposition required on the part of the Saviour. Symbols from the visible world seldom furnish precise equivalents for the transcendent ideas of redemption. But the main idea taught by this is at once clearly and adequately seen. We see that we are effectually screened from the menacing evil; we see that we are only so screened at the cost of the Shelterer's own exposure to it. The parent bird is a shelter to her young when, roused into strength and kindling into fury, she places herself between them and that which threatens them with harm, ready to spend all her life in their defence. A rock, out in the blinding glare of the wilderness, is a shelter to the traveller by being his substitute, and receiving the sun-stroke on itself. A shield in the day of battle is a shelter to the warrior only when the shattering blow rings on the shield itself. A covert on the storm-swept moor is a shelter to the shepherd, only because it stands between him and the slanting rain. Christ is a shelter to trusting souls,

only by interposing His own life between them and the shock of doom.

With the Bible in our hands, it is idle to discuss the possibility of being saved on any other principle. We may not be saved by mercy granted under a purely legal dispensation, for law is in its very nature calm, severe, and inexorable. It knows no exceptions, it makes no allowances, it admits no favourites. Law does not save the violator of law; it does not weep over him, does not pity him; it knows nothing of mercy. We are not to be saved by a change in the law, for law is the perfect and eternal rule of right, which from its very nature is changeless. We are not to be saved by love, and as a matter of personal feeling, if the expression may be allowed, on the part of the Judge; for perfection never clashes with perfection, and God's perfect love can never set aside the decisions of His perfect law. We are not to be saved by an act of physical omnipotence; for the case in question is a moral one, and therefore not a proper object of such power. We can only be saved by a shelter.

In the person of Jesus we see Divine nature mysteriously link itself with sinless human nature, constituting the one Person who can rightfully sustain our liabilities and stand in our place. For

this solemn purpose alone He came into our world. "He was made sin for us." "He was made a curse for us." "He was wounded for our transgressions, was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." The mandate went forth, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow." We strive in vain to measure the full force of these words, but they imply, at least, that the death of Jesus is accepted in place of the death due to those who are found in Him; that in the judgment of the supreme Ruler it affords a sufficient moral basis for their acceptance; and that it answers in the highest degree the ends of government. In the amazing mystery of the cross truth keeps its word, law maintains inviolate its spotless splendour, and love achieves the victorious miracle of securing everlasting life to those who had been by a righteous sentence doomed to die twice over.

With thoughts that seemed almost to overwhelm Him, the Saviour looked forward to the hour when, as our shelter, He was to intercept the stroke of the law. As it slowly, slowly drew nigh, all His soul rose higher and higher, until, strained to the utmost tensity of endurance and expectation, it seemed as if even He could hold out no

longer. There was a point in His path when to human view His resolution faltered. As the hour was about to strike He said, "Father, the hour is come, now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?" If His audience had been alive to the solemnity of that pause, and to the vastness of the interests that were balanced on the decision of that moment, with what awful suspense would they have held back their breath to hear the next utterance: and what was it? "Father, glorify thy name." Love was victorious over the weakness of His adopted nature; He went forward; He endured the cross; the fire of the flaming law, instead of consuming us, descended upon Him, and He became our Saviour by becoming our sacrifice.

V. While this symbol of a shelter is before us, let us have a clear understanding of THE ENDS to be attained by the sinner's flight to the Saviour. It is obvious that the immediate result is *safety*. To be out of Christ is to be in the open plain of wrath, but "the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." Now, it seems to be thought by some that safety is a mean and selfish consideration, and that men should be urged to become the followers of Christ by the sole power of higher motives, such as the charms of His Divine beauty, and the love of

goodness for its own sake, without regard to personal advantage. They think it unworthy of God's glorious love, and disrespectful to man's noble nature, for Christian ministers to make any appeal to the sentiment of terror, or the instinct of self-preservation. "Men are ready enough, without this," they say, "'to wear their religion as a mere life-preserver,' to think of serving God from mere commercial thoughts of profit and loss, and to be ruled simply by a calculation of what they will lose by impenitence, and what they may gain by faith." These sentiments have an air of truth and a sound of nobleness, but they contain a fallacy, and insinuate a charge that we deny. In no other sphere but that of the spiritual life are persons who are in peril branded as selfish for taking measures to be safe. We never hate as a mean emotion the joy that sparkles in a patient's face when his physician pronounces the words "Out of danger." It is not a selfish thing for a merchant, in some financial crisis, to labour night and day that he may work out the safety of his firm. When a slave breaks from his bondage, braves terrors worse than death, flies by night in ways where human foot has never passed before, hides by day in the dark fen, hears at intervals the tramp of the planter's horse and the bay of

the bloodhound in fierce pursuit, and at last, after his weary flight and perilous voyage, springs to the shore of the free land to which he has fled for shelter, the story fires our hearts with high admiration, we call it not a selfish but a right heroic deed, and we feel that God Himself has said, "Well done!" Why then should it be thought a selfish thing in man when, that he may be safe from the blight of spiritual sickness, safe from the fears of eternal bankruptcy, safe from the tyranny of a Satanic master, he flies to Christ for shelter? But more than this, it would be a radical mistake to suppose that the Gospel urges men to seek safety only for safety's sake. Safety in Christ is the first step to practical godliness. It is not merely that the soul may find a soft nest for itself beyond the reach of every penal stroke that it is invited to take shelter beneath the wing of mediatorial love. God would have us at home with Him, that He may teach us, that He may strengthen us, that He may make us holy. When we hide ourselves in Him who is infinitely holy, loving, and generous, the power of the Spirit, working through the law of assimilation, gradually makes us like that to which we cling. Beyond even this it should be remembered, that until we are safe in Christ we are precluded from taking part in the

enterprises of salvation. One condition of helping others is a right to interfere; another, is power to help them with. Both these conditions are wanting in the case of a man who is under condemnation. He is not authorized to undertake an office of trust under God's government while he himself is, in reference to that government, a rebel and an outlaw. His sentence must be cancelled, his attainder reversed, and his soul saved, before he has the right or the power to do highest good to other souls. So far from being a selfish thing to fly to Christ for safety, it is a selfish thing to despise that safety. It is a selfish thing for the starving wanderer not to return to the shelter of that home where his appearance would inspire songs of rejoicing. It is a selfish thing to refuse the offers of that Saviour who waits to give healing along with protection, to sanctify as well as to justify. The soul's health is its power of usefulness. "It is a basely selfish thing for a man to neglect himself. The sinner has a diseased self, and infects the neighbourhood."* So, from the noblest motives that can act on the human mind, and without the power of which there would be no true manhood, men are urged to fly to Christ for shelter.

* T. T. Lyach.

VI. This symbol of Christ is drawn in such a way as to show that MAN IS RESPONSIBLE IN THE MATTER OF HIS OWN SALVATION. Some of the darkest perplexities of our faith seem entangled in the text. An attempt just now to discuss those perplexities, and unravel that entanglement, would lead us away from the object contemplated in our Lord's language. It was not meant merely to furnish us with a great intellectual exercise. Its true spirit would evaporate, its solemn charm dissolve, in the harsh hand of metaphysical analysis. It is the utterance of the heart, and to the heart it makes its first appeal. Still, it raises within us questions respecting the harmony of the human will and the sovereignty of the infinite mind, questions which it is hard to silence, but which in this sphere of being we shall never fully set at rest. For while we know that salvation is "not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy"; while we remember that Christ has said to His disciples, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you"; while we believe to the utmost His great declaration, "No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him"; this text says that God *would* have done a certain thing, but that it was not done because man *would not* have it so. Christ was in

an agony to save those who nevertheless were lost. Who shall reconcile these statements? You must say, as Copernicus did respecting a brilliant astronomic fact, the truth of which was clearly ascertained, but the mode of which remained a mystery, "I have no reply to give, but God will be so good as that an answer to this difficulty will one day be found." As practical men, called upon to take immediate action on what we assuredly know, let us, by making Christ our shelter, act on what we learn from this melting apostrophe, respecting the awful power of the human will and our responsibility for its right exercise, for this at least we learn from it,—that men enhance their guilt by refusing salvation, that no man is violently forced into the shelter, that no man will be saved against his own consent, but that whosoever will may come and receive the blessings of eternal life freely.

THE ADVOCATE IN THE COURT OF MERCY.

XI.

"My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."—1 John ii. 1.

The Advocate in the Court of Mercy.

"MY little children, these things I write unto you." This opening sentence reminds us, first, of the speaker's *venerable age.* He has lived so long, and seen so much, that he might with truth and grace have called all the men of his day his "little children." Those dim eyes of his had once looked upon the "Word of Life"; the trembling hand that traced the lines of this epistle had, sixty years before, clasped the hand of Christ; in pensive, reverential tenderness he had drooped his head on the breast of incarnate Love; he had stood by the cross; with aching heart and straining gaze he had witnessed the ascension; he had seen Jerusalem in all its glory, and he had now lived to see it in its final ruin. A medal that lay on my table yesterday, with the inscription "Judaea Capta" scarcely legible through the

green rust of time, might have glistened on his table, bright and sharp from the die. Like Noah, he had lived to see an old world vanish and a new world born. He had lived to see the Apostles one by one enter into rest, until he was left to finish his journey alone. He was the last of those who had stood face to face with Jesus; the last of the seers, the last of the scribes; and when at length his hand dropped the pen, no other hand could take it up to write the messages of inspiration.

It reveals his *tender love.* God is love, Christ is God; and in the days of the Incarnation, John was Christ's beloved disciple; but near as he was to Him then, from the hour when the cloud received the Saviour out of sight he had lived still nearer. Through long years of mystic intimacy he had imbibed more and more of His spirit, until he was so filled with it that men seeing him saw more of Jesus than of John. Divine love within him outlived the strength and bloom of all his human faculties; when he was old, that was young; when he was weak, that was mighty; amidst the eclipse of intellect and the shadows of mortal infirmity, the pure, serene, unfading flame that lighted up his life was love. This holy love glows in the epithet of endearment with which he habitually addressed his younger companions

in the faith. His heart beat faster at the thought of them, and it was a relief to his overflowing affection to call them over and over again his "little children."

It puts us in mind of His *authority as a teacher.* All inspired men speak with equal authority of office, but not with equal authority of knowledge; they speak with equal accuracy, but not with equal range of light. But those of them who were endowed with the sublimest measure of the Spirit, would have been most glad to sit at the feet of "John the Divine," and to own his claim to call them "little children." No sayings of a mortal are to be found like his. So deep are they, so spiritual, so full of God, that they might have been spoken by a native of heaven; angels might have overheard them with delight; it does not seem extravagant to imagine them quoted with delight in the conversation of the glorified, and helping to waken the choral peals of paradise. This high estimate may be at variance with your first impressions on rapidly reading his epistles, written as they are in language so artless, so broken, so reiterative,—the natural language of old age, of old age at home. You first notice their simplicity, gentleness, and love. Qualities that go under these names are often signs of weakness, and modes of

commonplace thought. Owing to this association, you may not be prepared to find that here they cover so much. But there is an infinite difference between the simplicity of surface and the simplicity of clear depth; between the gentleness of easy good-nature and the gentleness, which is but the softness, refinement, and delicacy of power; between the love of the yielding universalist and love, where love and hatred are relatives,—abhorrence of that which is evil, burning in the measure of delight in that which is good. That love may spring from natural amiability, this love must result from participation of the Divine nature; it is ever in sympathy with the Divine mind; it is the faculty of insight into divine things; and without it there could have been no apostle of spirituality. John's words were simple, gracious, and loving in this highest sense, and to the highest degree. This is the secret of his heavenly greatness, the reason why holiest souls most love to absorb his thoughts, and why the Church in every age has consented to call him, in the language of pre-eminence, "the divine." Truly we are but his "little children." Amongst all the teachers Christ has sent to men there is no one like him, and we may say to them all, "Fathers, even you are but John's little children." Writing not to Christians in the first century

only, but to all Christians till time shall die, God gave him authority to say, "*My little children*, these things write I unto you."

We can often read a letter or a message the more intelligently for having first learned to read the writer; and we may hope that this brief study of John himself has prepared us the better to understand and appreciate his message.

"If any man sin we have an advocate* with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

I. Consider the FACT that "we have an advocate with the Father."

1. The first thought that dawns upon us in the course of considering this fact is that, from the nature of the case, such a mediatorial office *can only exist by the appointment of the absolute Ruler.* He who is our Supreme Ruler is our Father. In the natural order of the complex idea we have to contemplate Him first as Father, next as King. First, we receive our existence from Him as children; next, our law as subjects. "God's family being the public,—the universal public of created

* This term (παράκλητος) is applied by our Lord to the Holy Spirit, but the very passage in which He does so shows by implication that it is also His own title. "I will send you *another* Comforter."—John xiv. 16. Its first meaning, used as a substantive, is, *legal assistant, advocate* (Liddell and Scott's Lex.) In the passage now to be considered, it is translated by Luther, *fursprecher*, "spokesman, intercessor, deprecator"; and this rendering is regarded by Michaelis and Knapp as a most exact representation of the original word.

moral intelligence,"* it must be ruled as a kingdom; still, the Paternal heart originates the mode of the Royal administration. His children having, as we shall presently notice more at large, brought upon themselves the sentence of His law by their rebellion against Him, His love has devised and instituted a scheme by which they can be saved from the consequences of their crime, but which shall at the same time secure the honour of His justice and the order of His government. The grand principle of this scheme is that which is embodied in the mediation of Christ, and the one thought that should be clear and emphatic in this stage of the discourse is, that we owe to the Father Himself the appointment of an "advocate with the Father." The Father! Behind the great mystery of redemption there is the love of a Father contriving it all, inspiring it all, explaining it all. Apart from Christ, indeed, the infinite Father is an infinite Secret; but in Christ who "was with God, and who is God," God shows Himself; and we find that if all the love of all the fathers who ever have lived or who ever will live, could be purified from all stain and dissolved into one sublime paternal affection, it would be less than nothing in comparison with the love of Him "who spared

* Dr. William Anderson.

not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all."

2. Further consider this fact, and you will see that *it proves our need of an advocate.* There is a wise and exact economy in all the works, and ways, and words of the Divine Father. He never grants a needless gift, never founds a needless institution, and therefore the very presence of our Advocate in Court proves our need of advocacy. "This," you say, "requires no proof. It is not so much a truth as a truism, which every one is ready to admit without an argument and even without a thought." Not so; or if so, the mere habit of admitting it without a thought nullifies its effect, and amounts to practical denial. The Apostle contemplates the possibility of men saying "we have no sin." Ever since our first ancestors, from the impulse of guilty concealment, tried to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord amidst the trees of the garden, men have tried to hide themselves from God, and to hide themselves even from themselves; they have tried to seek shelter for their guilty conscience in the fiction of comparative innocence or imaginary merit; they have tried not to see their own sin. "There is no pleasure," says Lord Byron, "in the minute inspection of deformity"; and instinctively turning

away from the full sight of a thing so disturbing and repulsive as their sin, as if they could forget it out of existence, they have tried not to know about it, not to believe in it, willing to hush themselves into peace, and to live the victims of an inward lie.

"If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "There is none that doeth good, no not one." Man in the city, man in the wilderness, man shivering in the awful arctic night, and man burning beneath the fiercely beating beams of the tropical day, man everywhere—is a transgressor of the law. The world shows bewildering differences in other respects, but in this respect, says the Oracle, there is no difference, for "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

3. Advance another step in the consideration of this fact, and you will find that the advocate you need *pleads for you in the court of mercy.* Enforcing His claims to confidence, the Apostle goes on to say, "for he is the *propitiation* for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." Propitiation includes, in the very essence of its meaning, the idea of mercy. The "propitiatory" was the mercy-seat. The penitent's prayer, "Be propitious to me,"

is fitly rendered, "Be merciful to me." It was a plea for pardon in the way discovered by the figurative teachings of the mercy-seat. A form of the same word is here employed to reveal the principle of our Advocate's interposition, and to show that He only undertakes our cause as a minister of mercy.

When the great charge is brought against our souls, there are two courts open in which we have a right of reply. One is the court of God's justice. There stood the Pharisee; there stood Apollonius, with his rash demand, "Give me, O God, my dues"; and there, with the confidence inspired by the final insanity of sin, numbers of our race stand even now. The other is the court of His mercy. If pure, fair, heavenly justice were all that we asked for, we should be certain to obtain it within the jurisdiction of the first court. But the truth of the indictment against us has been established; justice is our most dread foe; we have all been tried, convicted, cast, and left to die. What, then, must we do? This imploring cry may be answered in the words of an old English preacher,* "What must thou do? carry thy cause into a higher court: appeal from the court of justice to the court of mercy. Counsel

* Samuel Bolton, Minister of the Word, Saviour's Church, Southwark, 1645.

is provided for thee there, for there, 'if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.'"

4. Consider the fact still more intently, and you will see that "advocate" is the title of a helper *whose aid must be invoked.* According to the primary sense of the relative terms in question, a "client" means one who calls in the aid of an advocate; an "advocate," one who is called to the aid of a client. This is the meaning of the Greek word and of the Latin equivalent which is here given in its Anglicised form. On God's part "all things are ready," the apparatus of help is complete, the court is open, and the Pleader is waiting; but the whole machinery of mercy stands still until you use it, and Christ is silent until you invoke Him. He longs after you, He is listening for you, and whether your call to Him be loud as the shout that ascends from a sinking wreck, or low as the whisper that faints over dying lips, or secret as the voiceless language of the soul, it will be distinct to His ear amidst all the hallelujahs that thunder round His throne, and at the moment of your first appeal will bring Him to your side as a kind and faithful Pleader.

II. Think over THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE PERSON TO WHOM THIS ADVOCACY IS INTRUSTED.

With a view to certain practical inferences which we shall presently notice, the Apostle would fill our souls with a sense of our Advocate's greatness. The spirit of his language seems to be, "Do you know who He is? He is no less a person than Jesus Christ the Righteous!" No long argument is needed for His purpose, this simple mention of a name is enough. That name is the symbol of a Person in whom all possible qualifications for advocacy are combined, centralised, perfected, enthroned. It is the name of One who never lost a cause, and with whom failure is absolute impossibility. Think your way into the meaning of this name, reach after it, turn it round and round in your minds, until the impression aimed at by this announcement has been fully made. Client of Christ, *think* of your Advocate.

1. Think *of His character.* He is Jesus Christ "*the Righteous.*"

When Sir Walter Raleigh, involved in a network of malice, had been brought to trial for high treason, and unjustly been condemned to die, his mind turned from the thought of the earthly court in which he had suffered vile insult and cruel wrong, to the thought of the court in heaven; from the king's attorney here to Him whom he called "the King's Attorney" there; and on being

ferried from Westminster to that dark cell in the Tower, which most of you have visited with hushed footsteps and hushed breath, he wrote, by lamplight, these words :—

"From thence to heaven's bribeless hall,
Where no corrupted voices brawl,
No conscience molten into gold,
No forged accuser bought or sold ;
No cause deferred, no vain-spent journey,
For Christ is there, the King's Attorney.
And when the grand twelve-million jury
Of our sins, with direful fury,
'Gainst our souls black verdicts give,
Christ pleads His death, and then we live.
Be Thou my Speaker, taintless Pleader,
Unblotted Lawyer, true Proceeder !
Thou giv'st salvation, even for alms,
Not with a bribèd lawyer's palms.
This, then, is mine eternal plea,
To Him that made heaven, earth, and sea."

In language so grand in its truth, and so touching in its antique simplicity, did the great Englishman give his reason for trusting Jesus, and declare his resolution to commit his misrepresented cause into His hands alone. For the same reason let us avow a similar decision. All other reasons would be inadequate without this. Even amongst men, righteousness is the one trustworthy element of character, and in the exigencies of earthly life we should refuse to trust ourselves wholly to a man,

whatever his other claims on our trust might be, who was notoriously a man without principle. But my Saviour is distinguished from all who have ever lived in human form since Eden faded, as being one whose rectitude was emphatically perfect. Even theorists who have dared to withhold from Him the honours due to Deity, have confessed their faith in the spotless splendour of His humanity. The law itself is not more righteous than He, "for in His life the law appears drawn out in living characters." If, indeed, He will undertake to bear me safely through the tremendous crisis in which my soul is placed at the divine tribunal, I will trust Him, before I know anything else of Him; I will trust Him, for, at least, I know that He is righteous; I will trust Him, for He has invited me to trust Him, and righteousness will never break its word or betray its trust.

2. Think of *His plea.* His plea is in harmony with His character. If we would know its terms, we must part company with the speculatist, forget our human notions of probability, give up every ideal gospel, and consent to be taught by the Word of God alone. There we learn that God saves transgressors on the ground of righteous substitution. By a Divine arrangement Jesus stands as the representative man, the second

Adam, the Sponsor for those who believe. To secure their title to the rewards of law, He fulfils in their stead all its requirements. To secure their exemption from its penalties, He endures in their stead all its inflictions. "The lightnings and clouds of Sinai are all on Calvary, though unseen by us. They play and break not in the outward air, but in the sorrowing soul of Christ. He condenses and exhausts them all in His one atoning act. In His last cry He tells us that there is an end of sin, and that there shall be no end of law."* Does the law demand that the transgressor should suffer the penalty of transgressions? He pleads that He has undergone that penalty, and Justice has no more to allege against us. Does the law demand of us a perfectly holy life? He pleads that He has yielded to it a perfect obedience, and then it justifies at once Christ Himself and all souls who are in Him as their substitute. To use Cranmer's phrase, "He, for them, has fulfilled the law; they, in Him, are fulfillers of the law." We try in vain to speak of the Illimitable in clear, sharp, round language of definition; and, owing to the inadequacy of all earthly words to explain heavenly transactions,

* Rev. Alexander Raleigh, in "Plenteous Redemption"; a Sermon preached at Camberwell, April 17, 1860.

perhaps no mortal can state with strict scientific accuracy what we are trying to state now, yet we believe the present statement gives the substantial truth. Holding to it as we do, it aids us to see that the Gospel is designed to vindicate the principle of righteousness. We learn that through the interposition of an advocate we are saved not only for mercy's sake, but for righteousness' sake, and that He procures our free discharge and full justification by virtue of a plea that acknowledges the supremacy and satisfies the claims of law. His love to the law is never so illustriously shown as in the act by which He shows His love to those who have broken it ; and with peculiar reference to this, as the principle that ruled all His mediatorial course, it was said to Him on His coronation day, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

The nature of the plea advanced by our advocate is a new proof of His sufficiency, and a new motive to stimulate our trust. When, a few years since, a Mahometan convert at Calcutta came to Lal Behouri Sing for baptism, the missionary asked him, "What was the vital point in which he found Mohammedanism most defective, and which he found that Christianity

satisfactorily supplied?" His prompt reply was, "Mohammedanism is full of the mercy of God; and while I felt no real consciousness of guilt as the breaker of God's law this satisfied me; but when I felt my guilt I felt that it was not with God's mercy, but with His justice, that I had first to do. Now to meet the claims of God's justice Mohammedanism had made no provision, but this is the very thing that I have found fully accomplished by the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross; and, therefore, Christianity is now the only adequate religion for me, a guilty sinner."

I can understand this convert's speech. A plea for sinners that does not aim to satisfy righteousness, does not satisfy the highest sensibilities of my conscience. A Gospel of thoughtless, indiscriminate, latitudinarian human mercy does not win the consent of my judgment. My heart refuses to trust a Saviour who would deny my guilt, or extenuate it, or plead that for pure pity's sake it may go unpunished. All my soul stands up to contradict the theory of salvation by an expedient that slights, suspends, or changes the moral law. To me such a change is inconceivable. Perhaps I can dream of a day when gravitation may cease to act, when the old attractions and affinities, the old powers of air

and light, the old laws of combination and solution, may lose their hold. It is not for me to assert the essential immutability of mere physical law. but I am sure that the law which declares "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," will never change, until there is change in that Divine nature of which it is the transcript and expression. Right will always be right; justice and truth will endure for ever; and not even the mandate of an Omnipotent will can change the essence of a moral act, or stop its retributive issues of weal or woe. When, therefore, any theorist offers to me a scheme of mercy that makes no provision for meeting the stroke of inevitable law, I know by this token that, although he may speak like an angel of light, he is no messenger of God; but soon as Inspiration tells me of a Saviour whose plea for mercy magnifies law, and who plants on the very rock of righteousness the cross by which He saves me,—in this Gospel of common sense I find the Saviour I need, the secret my heart has been breaking to know.

3. Think of His *nature.* He has all natural qualifications for the undertaking. If, in relation to mere material interests, you had a cause of great importance pending, you would not commit that cause to one who, whatever his legal right

might be, had no natural power to undertake it; who, from the wreck of reason or the lapse of nervous life, had now no natural promptitude, no natural judgment, no natural power to thread the mazes of evidence, and no natural facility in the exercise of consecutive thought or speech. But summoned as you are to appear in a court where your very soul is on trial, and where eternal interests are in suspense like things quivering on the cast of a balance, it would be a freak of folly wild beyond all conception to commit the defence of those interests to one of whose natural fitness for the mighty undertaking you have no sure information. Guided by the light of heavenly Scripture, we find that the natural qualifications required in Him who has to take the office in question, and to advance the plea which has already been considered, are so strange and extreme that a mere glance at them confounds the reason. He must have natural power to understand the tremendous dilemma that sin has brought into the universe, and natural power to meet it; natural power to search the heart; natural power to change it; natural power to fill with his presence every place at every moment; natural power to work out a righteousness perfect as the law itself; natural

power for the sway of supreme dominion over all human spirits on earth and in heaven. Besides this he must have natural power to take the sinner's place, natural power to serve, natural power to suffer, natural power to die. That is, he must have the natural power of God and the natural power of man. In an advocacy so original and peculiar as that which involves mediation between God and man, it is past our ability to conceive how it could be otherwise. The stairway of light seen in the splendid imageries of the patriarch's dream touched both worlds, or it would not have been a medium of communication; a bridge flung across the river must touch both shores, or it could not be a medium of passage; and it seems but the language of fair analogy to say that a mediator between God and man must, in the mystery of his being, touch both natures, or he could not be the medium of intercourse. The yearnings of sinful but penitent humanity find voice in the ancient cry, "O that there were a daysman between us, to lay his hands on both!" We need an intervening Person, who can reach up to heaven and down to earth; lay a hand of Divinity on God, and a hand of humanity on man; for how could he who is only God mediate between God and man; and how could he who is only man mediate between man and God?

In the person of Jesus Christ these extremes meet, and this "grand redemptive synthesis" has been effected. Pointing to Him as His form rose amidst the thronging shadows of the future, Isaiah cried to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" Pointing to Him as He stood at the Roman prætorium, Pilate said, "Behold the man!" and both witnesses testified the truth. Divine He is, yet in the guise of human nature He walked on our earth, He drank of our streams, He knelt on our sod, He wrote on our sand, lived as we live, died as we die, and was buried in a grave. "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, believed on in the world, received up into glory." This confession, they say, ancient Christians set to solemn music, that was sometimes heard at midnight from the prisoner's cell, and that sometimes lived on the lips of martyrs when they met the flash of the spear, the spring of the lion, or the sight of the cross. We wonder not at their firm faith and deep enthusiasm, for the doctrine of our Advocate's Divinity and humanity, though it eludes our research and transcends our power of definition, is so clearly revealed, and at the same time is so strongly demanded to make up the perfection of His official fitness, that the creed is dear to us

as our life. With our own views, and speaking for ourselves, we should feel that to withhold our faith from it would be to deny our reason, to renounce our hope, and to give ourselves up for lost.

4. *Think of His acquaintance with your case.* Often, when a friend seems to serve you with keenest interest and with warmest love, you are ready to say, "If that friend knew me as I know myself, all that love would languish and all that ardour fade." Many a man whose friends have long defended him against adverse opinion, has lost all that defensive sympathy as soon as the facts of his case became fully known. It has happened before now, even in forensic history, that an advocate has felt forced to relinquish his brief, in consequence of some unexpected disclosure that made proceeding with the case a course that would hurt his self-respect, or compromise his reputation. Secrets have come to light in the life of a child, that have silenced even a mother's advocacy, and made love itself confess that it had no more to say. But you never need fear that for reasons like these Christ will abandon your cause, or fail in your defence. Before you confide to Him a single secret His acquaintance with your whole life is intimate and perfect. What was said of Him by the beloved disciple holds true

for ever, "He needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man."

Every one has heard of the client who came to Him as He sat in the Pharisee's house. "She was a woman of the city who was a sinner." With lingering step, with fixed pathetic face, and with nervous fingers trembling round the alabaster box of precious ointment, she waited about the open door, afraid to venture in, yet dying to tell her Lord her story, and to offer Him the simple token of her praise. At last she glided swiftly to His side. Then, in the hurry and trepidation of the moment, she forgot her errand, dropped in weakness at His feet, and wept over them a rain of involuntary tears; then catching at her own long tresses, she hastily wiped the tears away; then, in a hurry of emotion, she kissed those blessed feet; then breaking the box, she laved them with the fragrant essence. There the penitent knelt, exhausting all the evidences of humility and love, while Christ beamed upon her a glance of ineffable tenderness. The Pharisee snatched back his robe from the contaminating touch, and stood up, struck with speechless wonder. "Ah!" thought he, "my guest is at length found out. I have him now. This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who or what manner of woman this is that toucheth

him, for she is a sinner." But Jesus *did* know. He knew that poor castaway before she knew Him, and better than she knew herself; her life—how dark were the passages of its secret history; her soul—how lost it was; her whole nature—how broken, trampled, and profaned. But because she looked up to Him from the depths, and felt her cause to be desperate, He heard her mute prayer, and stood up as her defender. Stung by the cold, splashed by the rain, cursed by the priest, shunned by purity, cast off by love, basely trodden down deeper and deeper in the mire of misery, she might have been; but Jesus, who had power even on earth to forgive sins, made her cause His own, cleared her from every charge, filled her with holy peace, lifted her from degradation, and set her on high, that she might shine as a star for ever in the kingdom of His Father. So exquisitely delicate and complete was the generosity of His love that, while He has made immortal the story of her salvation, He has not allowed the world to know her name.

"He would not have the sullied name
Once fondly spoken in a home,
A mark for strangers' righteous blame,
Branded through every age to come.

"Trusted to no evangelist
First heard where sins no more defile,

Read from the book of life by Christ,
And consecrated by His smile."*

It will be our own fault if we miss the moral of this narrative. It is a typical instance selected to show that the vileness of the suppliant will not repel the grace of the Saviour, and that the sinner's vileness was perfectly known to Him when He undertook to be the sinner's advocate. A mortal friend may depend for his knowledge of your case upon your own revelation of it. After your statement has induced him to plead in your defence, you may be haunted by the fear that perhaps you may not have told him all, and that some material fact that you have forgotten, or have unconsciously stated inadequately or in excess, may come to light, and change his opinion, or chill the fervour of his advocacy. But Christ has not learned your story from your own confession. You could not if you would have told Him all. "The heart is deceitful above all things, who can know it?" Motives that seem to you white as the light, may prove, when seen through His prism, to be many-coloured. Aims that seem straight as a line may, when tested by the right standard, prove indirect and tortuous. We shall find at last that, in many cases, what we have thought devotion was indevout; what we have

* "The Three Awakenings."

thought love was struck through with the taint of selfishness; what we have thought faith was utterly vitiated with the poison of unbelief. Not only the coarse, violent, and repulsive sins which man consents to call by their true names, and from which society tries to defend itself by penal legislation, but sins that hide under surfaces of refinement, and are never considered to lower the sinner's standing of social respectability, "respectable sins; genteel sins; elegant, cultivated sins; exclusive and fashionable sins; industrious, thrifty sins; learned, scientific, eloquent, highly poetical sins";* all flame into distinctness under the burning glance of Christ; He knows all the heart, and is the only Searcher who can sound its depths and explore its windings; He knows all the spirit's history, from the dawn of consciousness to the present moment: He knows all sins, in all their fine subtleties, in all their black atrocities, in all their astounding audacities. *Christ knows the worst of us,* and guilty as we are in our own estimation, we are guiltier far in His, yet, "He loved us and gave himself for us." He is a Pleader who will only speak for the speechless, only save the utterly undone. He undertook our cause with the perfect understanding that we had uttermost need of a Saviour, and He will not

* Bushnell.

violate His pledge to "save unto the uttermost all who come to God by Him."

III. TRACE THE INFLUENCE WHICH THESE THINGS ARE TO HAVE UPON YOUR LIVES.

1. *You are to avoid presumption.* "These things I write unto you, that ye sin not." Some would draw from these things the exactly opposite inference. They would say to a man who is justified by the righteousness of Christ, but who, strives against sin, and pants after perfection, "Be at rest! be at rest! Jesus has taken your place; if you do sin He is responsible, and no sin can hurt you now!" To contend for such a sentiment is in effect to be guilty of the last perversion of the Gospel; it is to graft the pestiferous Upas on the tree of Life; it is to distil poison into the fountains of salvation. Leaving theologians like these, with whom argument would be useless, we make our appeal to men, who, while they avowedly repudiate such an extreme creed, have yet caught some infection from it, and who so hold the doctrine of Christ's substitutionary work that the thought of it has made them less alive to the enormity of sin, and less afraid of its defilement than they would otherwise have been. "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?" Is this the kind return, are these

the thanks you owe to God's infinite generosity? Will you sin that grace may abound? Will you forget that the moral of every doctrine of grace is "Go and sin no more"? Do you know so little of honour and love as not to know that "real obedience begins only where slavish terror ends, and that the principle most prolific of loyalty and unwearied services is love?" Because Christ died for your sins, will you love your sins? Because Christ has magnified the law, will you slight the law? Because the Father has put the best robe upon you, do you feel more at liberty to grieve His Spirit? When you say that you have "put on the righteousness of Christ," and while you sing,—

> "Midst flaming worlds in this arrayed
> With joy shall I lift up my head,"

do you lose sight of the truth that there must be a correspondence between your character and this robe that you profess to wear, and that the merit of Christ justifies none but those whom His Spirit sanctifies? It is not asserted that you must be sinless before you are safe, but only that you must not presume that you are safe before the grace of God makes you long to be sinless. A soldier's uniform is to be worn only by a soldier; a

student's gown only by a student; a saint's robe only by a saint. As we call him a soldier who has only just enlisted, as we call him a student who has only just entered college, we call him a saint who has only just begun to believe, and has yet everything to learn and everything to feel that belongs to the sanctified life. Still, a saint he must be, one whose vocation it is to be holy, and who strives daily to obey the Divine voice within him, that is ever saying, "Sin not, sin not, sin not"; or he can have no interest in the Saviour's righteousness. "All the revelations of God, and all His works in every department of His agency, cry out to the justified man in one language, and say to him, 'Sin not.' 'Call God what you will, name all His names, styles, and titles, spell all the characters of His glory, and you find in every one of them the charge, Sin not.'" "Is He light? then sin not, for sin is darkness. Is He life? then sin not, for sin will darken your souls and kill them. Is He love? then sin not, for sin against Him is not simple disobedience, it hath the abominable stain of ingratitude on it. Is He holy? then sin not, for this is most repugnant to His holiness, and if thou wouldst have Him look upon thee with favour, thou must not look upon sin with favour, or entertain it with delight. Is

He great and powerful? then sin not, for that were madness. Is He good and gracious? then sin not, for that were abominable wickedness. Is He just? then sin not, for He will not acquit the wicked, nor hold them guiltless who do acquit themselves, and yet hold by their sins. Is He merciful? Oh! then sin not, for wilt thou sin against the mercy that saveth thee? . . . Look upon all His particular acts of care and favour towards thee; consider His judgments upon the world, upon the nation, and upon thine own person; put to thine ear and hear,—this is the joint harmonious melody, this is the proclamation of all, that we sin not, that we sin not against so good a God. If He wound, it is 'that we sin not'; if He heal again, it is 'that we sin not'; doth He kill? it is 'that we sin not'; doth He make alive? it is to the same end. Doth He shut up and restrain our liberty, either by bondage, or sickness, or other afflictions? Why? 'That we sin not.' Doth He open again? He means the same thing, that we sin no more lest a worse thing befal us. . . . But consider the greatest end and furthest design of the Gospel is inseparably linked and chained unto this, 'that we sin not.' 'There is a treaty of peace made with the sinner, . . . but no treaty, no capitulation or composition with

sin; out it must go, first out of its dominion, then out of its habitation. It must lose its power, then its being, in the believer; yea, this is one of the chief articles of our peace, not only required of us as our duty, that we should destroy that which cannot but destroy us; but also, and especially, as the great stipulation and promise on Christ's part 'to redeem us from all our iniquities and purify us to himself, a people zealous of good works.' . . . And what motive is like this? 'The Son of God shed His blood to cleanse me from all sin!'" "Can a soul run into the mire and defile itself again when it sees how dearly the fountain of cleansing was purchased? Can a believing heart have such treacherous thoughts harboured within it, as to 'crucify afresh the Lord of Glory,' and, as it were, 'to trample under feet His blood'?"*

The charge, "Sin not," derives its ruling motive from Christ's completed work; its sure efficacy from the promise of the Spirit's invigorating grace. There is no excuse for disobedience, for, in the life of a Christian, the operations of human endeavour and Divine help will always be coincident, and all the power of Omnipotence waits on the weakest Christian's prayer, "Lord, make me holy!"

* Detached and abridged sentences from Hugh Binning's "Fellowship with God." Edin. 1671.

2. *You are to avoid despondency.*

"And, *if any man sin* we have an advocate with the Father." The greatest sinner least comprehends the real nature of sin, the greatest saint most. Hence, the men whose spiritual life is most faint and wavering are most in danger of presumption; and the men whose spiritual life is most advanced are sometimes most in danger of despondency. As grace deepens conscience becomes more tremulously sensitive; with growing light there is a growing sense of unworthiness, and they are apt to think themselves worse when they are only wiser.

Before me lies a faded manuscript in the handwriting of a Puritan scholar, containing notes of his conversations with "that holy primate of Ireland, Doctor James Usher, in the year wherein he died." Early in that year he paid a visit to the writer, who made humble request to him that he would give him on paper his thoughts touching the mysteries of justification and sanctification, and obtained his promise to do so. A few months later he visited him again, but without the promised document, and said in apology for his failure, "I did begin to write, but when I came to do so of *sanctification*, that is of the new creature that God forms by His Spirit in every

soul which He doth in truth regenerate, I found so little of it wrought in myself that, apprehending I should write but as a parrot speaketh, by rote, and without knowledge, I durst not presume to do so." A few days later still, in the moment when this meek and holy servant of Christ left the world, the attendant, who saw his lips tremble and bent over to catch the whisper of his last breath, heard it pass away with the prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Example this, I think, of a holy man, whose very holiness made him so alive to the presence of sin that he found it hard at times to keep from despondency.

But this keen perception of sin, leading to despondency, is not always caused by growing holiness. The backslider may feel it. Almost every awakened spirit, at some time or other, has felt it. Whoever feels it, here is a revelation that furnishes an antidote to all despair.

Christ sees amongst us this morning many hearts made sad by sin, the causes of whose sadness are endlessly diversified, and known to Him alone, but this text conveys a comforting assurance suited to them all. There sits a man whose heart is sad, from a tendency to morbid introspection, who looks within when he should look above, and who thinks of sins exclusively

when he might be joyfully thinking of his Saviour. To borrow the saying of a Reformer, "Conscience brings false information against him renewing charges that have been cancelled and crossed out long ago," but he does not know that they are "crossed out," because he is ever listening to himself, rather than to the "Faithful and True Witness." There sits another man whose spirit is low, who has lost the joy in God and the power in prayer felt in earlier days, and to whom Christ is becoming a stranger, because, though outwardly the habits of his first love remain, the love itself to which those habits owe their formation is dying down. Some one little secret sin which he refuses to give up is slowly killing his soul; perhaps in some one particular he persists in a verbal or practical untruth, and his better nature is faint from the poison of "the lie that sinketh in." There sits another man whose absorption in worldly pursuits long deadened the delicate sense of right and wrong, and charmed him by slow degress into a deeper and yet a deeper sleep, out of which he has at last wakened up in sudden terror. There sits another man, who, shaken by fierce young passions, and overpowered by the spell of some seductive gaiety, has done something in the delirium of a moment, which has left him ever

since cowering in the horror of "great darkness." There sits another man, subdued and gentle in soul, but unspeakably mournful, for he has been "overtaken with a fault," and though he has since been "restored in the spirit of meekness," he has never been able to forgive himself, and fancies that he shall never lift his head again. There sits another man, who has been excommunicated, and sees no hope of reinstatement in the Church: but it is useless, as it is needless, to prolong this train of supposition. It is enough to know that there is pardon to be found for every sin, and comfort for every sorrow. "If *any* man sin," whoever that man may be, and whatever that sin may be, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

THE AWAKENER.

XII.

"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when awake, with thy likeness."—PSALM xvii. 15.

The Awakener.

SOFTLY stealing in and out amongst the ferns and feather-grass, the wild creatures of the jungle track their prey for hours, and when at last they have scented out the spot where the little bright-eyed antelope laps the shaded stream in the depth of the forest, they stop, take aim, trail themselves forward to crouch behind a nearer and yet a nearer tree, and there they lie, tense and motionless, eyes ablaze, mouths level with the ground, not a stir in the foot, not a quiver in the sharp ear, until they can make the sure and deadly spring.

David may have sometimes witnessed such a sight in his wanderings among the woody hills of Syria, then the haunt of the lion and the leopard, and the memory of such a sight may have suggested the metaphor that he employs to depict his

circumstances at the time to which this Psalm refers, the time, perhaps, when he was a fugitive, hiding in the cave of Engedi or in the wilderness of Ziph, from Saul's soldiers. They were to him like fierce animals; he was to them like their hunted prey. Listen to his plaintive prayer, "Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me under the shadow of thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about. . . . They have now compassed us in our steps; they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth; like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places." Such was their hatred to him for his love to God, that all their humanity was turned into ferocity, more like lions than men they were bent on his destruction, and were thirsting for his life.

Judging by mere worldly standards, we might have thought that men who thus pitilessly sought the life of him who was "the man after God's own heart," would have been branded, even in their worldly lot, with the signs of God's displeasure; that their strength would have been smitten with the blow of His hand, that their homes would have been childless, their coffers empty; their flocks cut off from the fold, their

herds from the stall, no blossom on their fig tree, and no fruit upon their vine.

But no, for earth is not the final scene of retribution. Men who give their hearts to this world often win all its prizes; choosing their portion in this life, they often have all that this life can give. Their earthly nature, the only nature they know, is filled to satiety with earth's good things. David, however, does not envy the lot of his enemies, nor murmur at his own. He has a source of satisfaction infinitely higher than theirs, and he therefore describes such men, and himself in contrast with them, in words that may thus be rendered: "Deliver my soul from the wicked, that is Thy sword; from mortals who are Thy hand, O Jehovah; from mortals of the world, whose portion is in" *(this)** "life, and whose belly Thou fillest with Thy hidden store."† *Their* children are satisfied, and the rest of their substance they leave to *their* (the sons') children.

I, in a state of righteousness, shall behold Thy face; I shall be satisfied when I wake in Thy likeness.

* Like "υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου." Luke xvi. 8. "Ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου." John viii. 23.

† "The 'hidden store' of God here means rare and peculiar dainties, since God often endows the wicked, not merely with all the ordinary comforts of life, but also with such as are of an uncommon kind."—CALVIN.

I. In our study of the Psalmist's words the first thing in question is, THE AWAKENING THAT HE TEACHES US TO ANTICIPATE.

1. The expression, "when I awake," may apply to *the waking of the soul out of this life.* According to the ordinary notion, in life we are awake, in death we are asleep; according to the words as we understand them here, in life we sleep, in death we wake out of sleep. Whether or not this was the precise meaning of the Psalmist we may not feel positive, but at least we are sure that this is a truth, and that his language fits the fact. The moment of dying is but the point at which we cease to be mortal.* Thought and memory and love can never be turned into cold white ashes,—

> "Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
> Was not spoken of the soul."

Death is not an extinction of the vital principle, but a new mode of its development, an inconceivable heightening and waking up of all that essentially belongs to it.

Our natural powers will then awake. Even the best known and most wakeful of them all are now comparatively dormant, and will not fully waken till we die.† Besides these known powers, it is

* "Desiit mortalis esse." Inscription on Dr. Jortin's tomb.

† "When we possess an immediate and intuitive view of His nature and excel-

reasonable to suppose that there may be others fast asleep, powers of whose nature we can form no guess, and for which we now could find no name; powers now unknown, as to an infant are unknown the manly faculties, thoughts, and aspirations that will one day stir mightily within him. They are asleep, as David's harp was asleep, until striking it, he said, "Awake, psaltery and harp, I myself will awake early!" Asleep, as in the organ tones tender, mournful, jubilant, adorative, all sleep to wake at the touch of a master into thrilling thunders of stormy music, or moving cadences of almost silent sound.

Our spiritual life will then awake. Compared with what we were before conversion, we are awake now; compared with what we shall be when we leave the body, we are asleep. Your own experience will testify to the truth of this. There are some dull moments when you are so stupified by the spells of the present, when you have so inhaled the deadly chloroform of a sinful atmosphere, or when you are so bound by the despotism of the senses that you can hardly rouse

lences, and see Him no longer 'through a glass, darkly, but face to face,' no doubt the powers of the soul will find full employment, without danger of feeling itself straitened, in Him who is 'all in all.' There are, probably, faculties in the soul which are here either not apparent at all, or are very imperfectly developed."—ROBERT HALL: Sermon on "No Temple in Heaven."

yourself to believe that you are a spirit, that you are on the verge of infinite peril, that you will soon see God, that you must really live for ever! Times when you wander on like a sleep-walker, until at some shock in life you start out of the charmed slumber and cry, "What am I? where am I? whither have I wandered? Faith has been asleep, hope asleep, love asleep! Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" So low at the loftiest is our present vitality that probably the man who is now most at home in prayer, most alive to the unseen world, and whose love to God flames up highest, will, in the moment when excess of life shakes down this tabernacle of bodily decrepitudes, be ready to say, "I never was awake till now!"

We shall awake from all that is *dreamy and unsubstantial.* So the veteran evangelist, Andrew Fuller, waking at night out of a sleep made feverish by many cares and many crossing thoughts, was overheard to sing, as he paced about his room,—

> "This life's a dream, an empty show;
> But the bright world to which I go
> Has joys substantial and sincere,—
> *When shall I wake and find me there?*"

You may be impatient with the prosaic moralist, who informs you that "life is a dream"; yet he could scarcely picture it by a more fit similitude. It is illusive like a dream. It may absorb you; so does a dream. It may seem long while you are passing through it; so does a dream. "We dream more in a minute than we can act in a day."* There was an hour last night, perhaps, in which you seemed to live long years; to see your companions grow old and slowly fade into the grave; to stand rooted in the paralyzing shadow of some spectral presence, and to drive through a racket of gaieties, or a crowd of exciting adventures, or a hurricane of changes. The interest of the drama rose higher and higher, till you woke at some climax of intolerable anguish or delight, and found that all was a dream. An hour will soon strike when by-gone life may look like that; when your whole history on earth may seem short as now seems last night's dream; when many of those things which now strain your life with a sense of their urgent importance may seem trifling or deceptive as the masterless fancies that then made all your world. The "immortal," who has just left the body, has flashed through a change like the transit from dreaming to waking, and has

* Kant.

sprung with a bound from the world of shadows to the world of realities.

"Oh! change—oh! wondrous change—
Burst are the prison bars—
This moment *there*, so low,
So agonized, and now,
Beyond the stars!

Oh! change—stupendous change!
There lies the soulless clod;
The sun eternal breaks,
The new immortal wakes—
Wakes with his God!"*

2. While the term will apply to the waking of the soul out of this life in the hour of dissolution, it will also apply to *the waking of the body out of the grave* in the hour of resurrection. The interval between the moment when we die and the moment when we rise again will not be one of blank unconsciousness or suspended animation. From that moment glory will begin, but we must believe that it will not be complete until our whole nature is complete, and, materially as well as intellectually, the entire man is in heaven. While that part of his being that can think and love, remember and anticipate, is awake; that part of it to which belong the functions of seeing and hearing, acting on matter and receiving impressions from outward

* Mrs. Southey.

things, will be still asleep. The terror before which every natural instinct trembles with immeasurable dismay, Jesus has taught us to know under the soft and tranquil name of sleep. It is true that this term was sometimes given to it by nations who had never heard of Jesus, but when they did so it was chiefly to suggest ideas of silence, darkness, and that unconsciousness out of which the dead will not waken, though armies march in trampling thunder across their graves. But, as used by faith, it has chief reference to sleep in its bright and delightful associations. "Sleep is the pause of care, the parenthesis of human woe." Sleep is the transient process, the kind provision of nature for the renewal of exhausted being. We commit ourselves to sleep, only that we may rise out of it with the freshness of renovated strength. The mother is content to look upon her dreaming infant's face, and watch its smiles as they faintly kindle and softly pass away, for out of that sleep the touch of her lips can easily waken it into its own world of happy, playful, wondering life. So with only gladsome thoughts in our minds do we speak of the Christian's death as a sleep. It is rest—sweet rest; rest for the weary brain, rest for the worn-out body, and rest that shall issue in renovation. The sick, the lame, the blind, the old,

the famine-stricken, the fever-wasted, all travel down the dismal road to the sleeping-place from which they shall come up again in resurrection splendour. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; they shall mount as on the wings of eagles, they shall run without weariness, they shall walk and not faint." It does not seem unphilosophical to anticipate that with the new mode of existence new organs of sense will be developed, in nature and numbers beyond conjecture, opening to our knowledge glorious phases and phenomena of the material universe which we, now endowed with only five senses, are at present unable to perceive.*

Nature can furnish no answer to the question, "If a man die, shall he live again? Physical science is silent on the secret until revelation

* Sir William Hamilton makes the following quotation from one of Voltaire's Philosophical Romances: "'Tell me,' says Micromegas, an inhabitant of one of the planets of the Dog-Star, to the secretary of the Academy of Sciences, in the planet Saturn, at which he had recently arrived in a journey through the heavens, 'Tell me how many senses have the men on your globe?' 'We have seventy-two senses,' answered the academician, 'and we are, every day, complaining of the smallness of the number. Our imagination goes far beyond our wants. What are seventy-two senses! and how pitiful a boundary, even for beings of such limited perceptions to be cooped up within our ring and our five moons. In spite of our curiosity, and in spite of as many passions as can result from six dozen senses, we find our hours hang very heavily on our hands, and can always find time enough for yawning.' 'I can very well believe it,' says Micromegas, 'for in our globe we have very near one thousand senses; and yet, with all these, we feel continually a sort of listless inquietude and vague desire, which are for ever telling us that we are nothing, and that there are beings infinitely nearer perfection."—LECTURES ON METAPHYSICS, vol. i., p. 143.

speaks, and then can only tell us that some natural facts are in harmony with the Scripture creed, and that none contradict it. It will hint at some analogy between the mystery of germination and the greater mystery which you vainly ask it to unveil. It will go so far as to say, "Somewhere in the seed there is a particle too small to be seen or touched, analyzed or weighed, which has concentrated in itself a power that will determine the form and continue the identity of the plant; and, perhaps, somewhere in the dust that once was a man there may be a sacred atom which never can be lost, but which only God knows where to find, holding in itself the germ, the personal identity, the determining power of the glorified body." More than this, human wisdom is unable to say. Even Divine oracles said but little on the question before the anointed Interpreter appeared. The doctrine of the resurrection was seen but dimly by the holy man of old. He might have said of it, as of some undefined and flickering phantom, "It passed before my face; it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof." But he was assured that in some unknown way he should glide uninjured through the gates of death into a paradise of ineffable magnificence, and that in his own conscious being, in his own separate

personality, and in his own perfect nature, he should see God and be satisfied. Sometimes, as in the case before us, he was guided by the Spirit so to express this assurance that his language was fitted to be the vehicle for holding anticipatively the complete knowledge of a later age. Not until Christ came was this article of faith fully taught. He taught it by miracles, He taught it by His own words, He taught it by the revelations that He put into the minds of His apostles, and He taught it with most triumphant proof by His own resurrection, in which we have the pattern and the pledge of ours. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, the firstfruits of them that slept." Sure as the fair colours of spring, or the rich sweeps of autumnal corn, sleep in shrivelled seeds that long lie buried underground, so does the glory of the resurrection lie latent in the graves of the saints; and sure as their Forerunner woke will they wake to see Him, and serve Him for ever. Through eyes, clear with the power of eternal youth and luminous with the love that sheds no tears, will they look upon us in the morning when each glorified soul will be reunited to its own glorified body, and the whole perfect man will be alive, never more to die.

II. In our further analysis of the Psalmist's

thought, the next thing to be considered is THE GREAT SIGHT which on awakening we shall certainly behold.

1. We shall behold *the face* of the Lord.

In this mortal stage of our development we gain our only knowledge of the Infinite One through the medium of symbols and veils, which from their nature must limit and shade the very light they distil; but an hour is coming when, every earthly symbol vanished and every veil withdrawn, we shall behold Him face to face. That face will be seen in the mystic moment of our wakening, for what was the first sight that met the eye of Peter when he woke out of sleep in the prison? The illumined face of the angel, who, with gentle violence, "smote him on the side," and summoned him to rise. What sight first met the waking eye of Lazarus when, with deep sob, heaving breast, disparted lip, and soul all dazzled with wonder, he stood up in his shroud at the gate of his grave? The face of Him who had just sounded the awakening mandate, "Lazarus, come forth!" The first sight that greets the waking life must be the face of the Wakener. The soul's wakener is always Christ. He holds suspended at His girdle "the keys of death and the unseen realm." "He openeth and no man shutteth;

shutteth and no man openeth." Death is not the work of a cold, impersonal, unfeeling law, but a royal act of the Saviour. He says to each disciple on His dying day, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." At the appointed moment of release He comes to a soul that has long been locked and enchanted in its dark house of clay, speaks the rousing word, turns the dread key, and forth flits the spirit into the spirit-land, "absent from the body, present with the Lord." But though the bliss of its vision will then be perfect, as far as its capacity to receive it exists, that capacity will not be perfect until the whole man, body and soul, stands before the throne. All inspired witnesses testify that Christ is to be the agent of that final awakening, just as truly as of the first. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and come forth." When earth's last morning dawns, He, assuming an aspect of infinite grace, will say in effect of all His sleeping saints, "I go to wake them out of their sleep," and when they "arise and shine," the glory that strikes upon them first will be glory from His countenance.

It is of our own Redeemer, therefore, that the Psalmist speaks. He avows his trust in the Christian's Lord, although he had never heard of Him under the name of "Jesus Christ." In the

dialect of his own economy he expresses the very sentiment of Paul, "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ"; the very sentiment of John, "We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is"; and as his expression, while so brief, is so comprehensive that words can scarcely go beyond it, we find in it a fitting motto for our thoughts on the great event of the day when the symbols we have lately studied shall have done their work, when, waking from our last sleep, we shall be startled, as by the splendour of a million miracles in one, with the sight of our Awakener's face, henceforth to be the magnet of our love and the eternal glory of our day.

2. We shall behold this vision in "*a state of righteousness.*" The word righteousness, as used by the holy poet, has the force of an adjective. It is not of the abstract *quality* of righteousness that he is speaking, but of a righteous or justified *state.* It seems to have reference to his acquittal by God from the charges brought against him by his enemies. "Hunt him down," cried they; "wear out his life, and visit on his devoted head the penalties due to crime, for he is an unrighteous man." While thus stung to the quick by evil imputations, it was joyful to think that God

Himself pronounced him "justified," and therefore entitled to see His face. Here, and elsewhere in the Psalms, we trace the germ of a doctrine which inspired scribes, who wrote more than a thousand years later, brought out into most ripe and glorious fulness. There is no vision of God in earth or in heaven for a man whom God has not justified. "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart."* "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance beholdeth the upright."† Consciously sinful as we are, these words, and words like these, would sound like the sentence of banishment from God, or would seem to toll the knell of every hope, if the wisdom of infinite grace had not found and revealed the way in which God, in harmony with perfect rectitude, can pronounce even the sinner just, and admit him to all the joys and honours that belong to "a state of righteousness." Thanks to the ever-blessed One, this gospel of justification is no secret to us who have trusted Christ, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through

* Psalm xv. 1. † Psalm xi. 7.

the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."* "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice," like David, "in hope of the glory of God."†

3. We shall behold this vision of the Lord "*in His likeness.*"

Early in the morning take from your mirror that trifle which, like a veil, has been accidentally flung over it, then turn it to the sun, and as the morning brightens its open face will flash back the sunbeams and sparkle from glory to glory with the likeness of the light that shines more and more unto the perfect day. "We all with open face, reflecting as mirrors the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." So, I think, we should read the apostle's language and interpret his noble metaphor. He represents the Christian, not as a person turned towards a mirror, but as being himself a mirror turned towards "the glory

* Rom. iii. 25, 26. † Rom. v. 1, 2.

of the Lord," which, as he presently asserts, is "in the face of Jesus Christ."* This turning to the Lord begins with that act of faith by which we are brought into "a state of justification," it remains the attitude of the soul all through time; even here as fully as our faculties permit, we see His face; "On His glory, divine and infinite, the believer's faith is permitted to look even while in the body: for it is softened down to the limit of our power, by dwelling in the person of our Brother."† As we wait upon Him with increasing faith, it shines like the morning sun with increasing distinctness of revelation, and increasingly transfigures the soul into its own likeness; but the full glory will not shine, nor the perfect image be reflected, until we drop the last veil; for though in our conversion the veil of unbelief was taken away, sinful tempers, and the infirmities of earthly materialism, still drop like black folds between us and Christ,–

"We are spirits clad in veils;
Man by man was never seen:
All our deep communion fails
To remove that shadowy screen."

At length every "shadowy screen" will fall, the unveiled soul will look upon the unveiled Saviour, and the reflection, like the glory that casts it, will be perfect for ever.

* 2 Cor. v. 6. † Rev. William Arnot

Ministerially, this spiritual transfiguration is effected by "the Spirit of the Lord." However clear the outward revelation of the truth may be, and however perfect its outward appliances, no transfiguring effect will be wrought apart from this Divine agent. The call of Christ may be tender and persuasive, but if the Spirit be resisted there will be no moral ability to respond, and the man who hears that call will be utterly unable, because utterly unwilling, to obey.* The doctrines of Christ may be fully proclaimed, but without the Spirit's influence on the disposition of the hearer those doctrines will meet with no sympathy. The throne of grace may be near, but without the "Spirit of grace and supplication" there will be no prayer. The Face that is "altogether lovely" may look upon the soul, but its light will be unseen, and its assimilating power unfelt; and it will be powerless to that soul as are the glories of splendour and shadow, form and colour to a man born blind, until the "Holy Ghost, the Comforter," come in fulfilment of the Lord's own promise, "He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine, and show it unto you."

Proud of his freedom and jealous for his

* "That," says Winter Hamilton, "is natural inability, in which we could no if we would: that is moral inability, in which we would not if we could."

dignity, a man whose life has not yet been changed into the likeness of Christ's life may assert his ability to change it for himself, by the act of his own free will and his own unaided power, whenever it shall so please him. It might be said, "Give us evidence of your liberty, put out your independent strength, and by the action of your own free nature, without trusting to supernatural assistance, *do* what you say you can do, understand Christ, love Christ, acquire the image of Christ!" The result of such an experiment would prove that man, rejecting the proffered influence of the Spirit of God, and striving alone, might as easily create a world as be a Christian even for a single hour. Mastered and fettered by principles at variance with the Divine will, he is ever dragged back from obeying the highest dictates of truth, reason, and conscience: nor is he *at liberty* to "rejoice in Christ Jesus," or to "perfect holiness in the fear of God." "But," says our Apostle, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. . . . We are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." So will the process of regeneration advance, until the hour when Christ shall waken us, and then "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

4. We shall behold this vision, *and be satisfied.* That which satisfies us must be suited to our nature; and, therefore, says Gregory, in illustration of this point, "You might as well try to fill a chest with wisdom as a soul with wealth." That which satisfies us must be large as our capacity; earthly good comes drop by drop, a little at most, and a little at a time; but we need a good that shall furnish for an ever-enlarging capacity an ever-enlarging supply. That which satisfies us must satisfy the hunger of every faculty; some things meet one faculty and some another; not one meets all, and, in the fullest sense, not one meets one. "The eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing." That which satisfies us must be holy; for, sooner or later, men find that the sin to which they have looked for their earthly heaven is the very element of hell. That which satisfies us must be immortal as our being. "If the aloe, the plant of centuries, were fated to be the appendage and parasite of the ephemeron, the insect of a day, it would be doomed virtually to early and lonely widowhood by the untimely decay of its idol, and the perfect inadequacy and early exhaustion of its appointed prop;" * so the soul, born for eternity, must soon be

* Dr. W. R. Williams.

utterly lonely and lost should it choose for its only stay that which can only last for a time. That which satisfies us must have infinite power to engage and delight our highest love; for "desire is love in motion, delight is love in *rest.*"*

The glory that shall be revealed to the sons of God has in it every element essential to make a satisfying portion. It suits our nature; it fills our growing capacities; it meets the hunger of every faculty and every affection; it is holy; it is eternal. Therefore cried a soul that was fighting its way into the unveiled presence of God, "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." To see Him in this perfect sense is to know Him perfectly, to feel His presence perfectly, to enjoy His confidence perfectly, and perfectly to reciprocate His love. "Oh, blessed vision!" was the apostrophe of an

* "For this satisfaction is the soul's rest in God; its perfect enjoyment of the most perfect good: the expletion of the whole capacity of its will: the total filling up of that vast, enlarged appetite: the perfecting of all its desires in delight and joy. Now delight or joy . . is fitly defined,—the rest of all the desiring faculty is the thing desired. Desire and delight are but two acts of love, diversified by the distance or presence of the same object; which, when it is distant, the soul, acted and prompted by love, desires, moves towards it, pursues it: when present and attained, delights in it, enjoys it, stays upon it, satisfies itself in it according to the measure of goodness it finds there. Desire is, therefore, love in motion; delight is love in rest: and of this latter—delight and joy—Scripture evidently gives us this notion: 'He will rejoice over thee with joy,' (unto which it is presently added as exegetical), 'He will *rest* in his love'; which resting can be but the same thing with 'being satisfied.'"—John Howe's Works, edited by Rogers, vol. i., pp. 71, 72. The same idea is impressively stated in Flavel's "Πνευματολογια," p. 25. 1698.

ancient confessor; "Oh, blessed vision! to which all others are penal and despicable! Let me go into the mint house and see heaps of gold, and I am never the richer; let me go to the pictures and see goodly faces, I am never the fairer; let me go to the court, where I see state and magnificence and I am never the greater: but, oh, Saviour! I cannot see Thee and not be blessed. I can see Thee here through symbols: if the eye of my faith be dim, yet it is sure. Oh, let me be unquiet till I shall see Thee as I am seen!"

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